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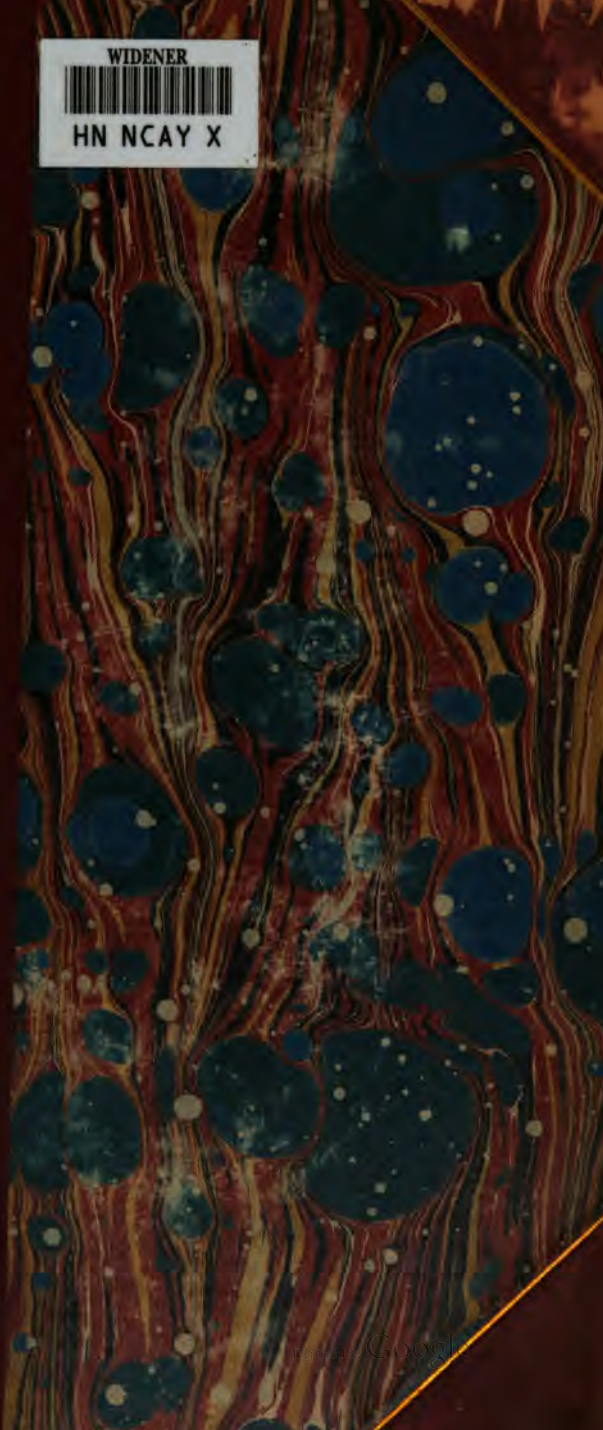
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THE
BIRTHRIGHT,

AND OTHER TALES.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF

"THE BANKER'S WIFE," "THE MAN OF FORTUNE," &c.

IN THREE VOLS.

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THE SMUGGLER'S DOG.

CHAPTER I.

Few districts in Europe are more devoid of local interest than the frontier-country between Belgium and France: especially at its maritime extremity, towards Western Flanders, where dykes and ditches, and an ill-favoured, aguish-looking population afford incontrovertible testimony to the fenny nature of the soil. In that flat and dreary landscape, where a canal becomes an interesting feature, and a flax-ground or tobacco field a towering plantation,—though the fertility of the reclaimed land is such as at least to secure the traveller against incurring the hatred of the benevolent Yorick by declaring all “barren,”—

the tedious sameness of the scene soon wears down his spirits to depression.

How much more then the spirits of those less fortunate individuals whom circumstances have endenized in those truly *Low Countries*, whose waters are brackish,—whose earth is spongy,—whose air baneful!—Persons so situated soon cease to wonder at the repugnance which has stripped so many of their quaint old towns of Western Flanders of the better order of inhabitants for whom their stately mansions appear to have been constructed: abandoning them to the occupation of weavers and lace-makers,—with only the pompous grave-stones of the grand old churches, to attest that, in days of yore, under the sceptre of Burgundy or Austria, high and puissant families abided beside those sluggish canals;—eventually consigning their bones to the tombs of high-born ancestors, coeval with the foundation of the Church.

In their degree, the Flemish villages have shared the fate of the cities;—producing a population far inferior to the thriving farmers in possession when France wrested from Spain the

fair provinces she chose to enjoy by the double right of conquest and queenly dowry. Instead of the sturdy boors we find in the groups of Teniers, Wouvermans, and Paul Potter, the modern inhabitants of the debatable land lying between Nieuport, Dunkirk, and Courtray, are chiefly smugglers, carrying on a reciprocal trade across the frontier ;—with the exception of a liberal allotment of gendarmes appointed by the two governments to watch over their maraudings, and the dykemen officially employed in the care of the sluices so important to the health and well being of the community.

Among the villages distinguishing themselves in the squalid district of Ypres by their contraband trade,—a village, by the way, which has the presumption to call itself a town,—is Vraeschoot ;—a little verdant nook, of which every separate habitation, small, green, and concealed amid surrounding vegetation, bears a striking resemblance to the ark of Moses resting among the bulrushes.

For an eye sufficiently habituated to the deficiencies and peculiarities of a Flemish landscape,

Vraeschoot possesses a certain degree of beauty. Its low roofs and bright green window-shutters—its glassy pools and highly cultivated meadows,—pretend to as much rural distinction as is compatible with the nature of a landscape which an ignorant or careless sluice-man at the neighbouring Sas might lay under water in an hour, converting the whole parish into a cheerless lake.—Such accidents, however, are unexampled; and Vraeschoot, though of amphibious aspect, has no record of an inundation to diversify the somewhat monotonous annals of her municipality.

For there is no admission, of course, into similar archives for the thousand interesting episodes derived from her perilous breach of international law by defiance of excise and customs, *octroi* and *droits réunis*; nor are the Vraeschooters ever heard to boast of the number of martyrs they have furnished to the blunderbusses of the *maréchaussée* while violating the rights of the *contributions indirectes*. Nevertheless, these things have become legendary in the village; and many a story, equalling in barbarous detail

the feats of the early buccaneers, is related in winter time beside the turf-warmed stoves of Vraeschoot. It seems to add flavour to the *eau de vie* for which they have fraudulently managed to exchange their Schiedam, and to the *cervelas* they have bartered for their salted stockfish, to relate their struggles with the officials appointed by the French and Belgic governments to restrict their traffic within the stricter letter of the law.

Last summer, in my zeal to complete a collection illustrative of the Flemish Flora by a few rare specimens of bog and aquatic plants, I spent a week in the comfortable little inn of the Korren Bloem at Vraeschoot; and to many a tale of local prowess was I compelled to listen while wearying out the morning in pursuit of marsh hyacinths, and the curious rushes and mosses of the Ypres swamps. After listening for a day or two to the buz of the dragon flies and other winged nuisances over the weed-crested ditches of that watery waste, the drone of the Flemish peasants appeared less insupportable.

According to the custom of the country, dinner was always laid in the inn-kitchen :—but it was a kitchen that might have sat for its picture of Flemish cleanliness to Van Hooghe ; the neatly varnished Cambray stoves, and bright blue Delft ware gracing the plate-racks, forming the only interruption to the general whiteness of walls, ceiling, floor, and dressers ; the former being white-washed at certain intervals of the year, and the floor daily strewn with fresh, white sand ;—while the stove-handles, and nearly all the kitchen utensils, were of brass, so brightly kept as to be more brilliant than vessels of gold or silver.

By the time dinner was over, the tapering decanter of Faro and tall thin-stemmed beer-glass removed, and, by way of dessert, the stunted fruits of the country and a dainty formed of pastry and treacle appropriately called *Bonbon de Sluys*, placed upon the table, the good women of the house, Vrouw Van Kerckx and her wooden faced daughter Trincia,* used

* Written Trinje by the Flemish.

to draw near, with their knitting needles in their hands ;—the latter having abandoned her less portable lace-pillow for the express purpose of gossiping with a stranger sufficiently unversed in the ways of Vraeschoot to find amusement in anecdotes of its illicit trade and the judgments thereby provoked.

Sometimes it occurred to me that Vrouw Van Kerckx exhibited a closer insight into and warmer interest in these exploits, than was altogether reconcilable with her deep devotion to Church and State. In the eagerness of narration, she often spoke as though an eyewitness of the feats she was relating,—like an old sportsman or veteran warrior warming with the recapitulation of heroic scenes in which they have borne a part ;—till, at length, I began to surmise that the Macon and Médoc, issuing from the gelid cellars of the Korren Bloem,—(where according to its sign and inscription : VERKOOP MAN ALLE SORTEN VON DRANK) had made no pecuniary acknowledgment to his Majesty King . Leopold for the honour of entering his dominions.

"But *you* have never taken any share in these daring enterprises?" said I, addressing Vrouw Van Kerckx, at the close of one of her strange, eventful, histories. "*You* would not, surely, defraud the revenue, by smuggling?"

"And why *not*?" cried she, crossing her arms defyingly, over the jacket of her Flemish costume. "Wherefore is a poor widow woman like myself, to abide by the juggling of princes and their ministers;—who deal with nations and languages as with flocks and herds, creating as it were a line in the air, which they advance or retrograde at will, and which is to make me French or Fleming according to their whims and fancies? My old grandfather used to boast of having spoken with those who remembered the time when Flanders extended half way into the France of to-day,—the time when Marlbrook came soldiering here, and for all the great victories we hear so much of, left the *grand monarque* in possession of our finest provinces! Even I,—I, Lottje Van Kerckx, who am speaking to you,—recollect the period when the French eagle was the Imperial standard for our

stamps ;—when Brussels, which now calls itself a capital, was but a country-town like the rest of us ;—and all was France, France, France, from Rouen to Hamburg ;—paying toll and tax to the same Parisian seat of government !—And why, pray—because it pleased the crowned heads of Europe to knock themselves together at Aix-la-Chapelle, and decide that this patch of ground should be called Prussia, and t'other patch of ground be called France,—is a poor widow woman to pay mulct and fine to this new king of ours, for liberty to drink and retail the French liquors, which, in my youth, I bought and sold at prime cost ? *I* had no hand in their rubbishing congress !—*My* opinion wasn't asked ! And so, without further ceremony, feeling myself guiltless in the sight of ALMIGHTY GOD for violating a law which is none of his making, I make bold to catch the gendarmes of the frontier napping, whenever they are fools enough to let me !”

It was no province of mine to resolve this complex periphrasis into the simple word “smuggling,” or remind mine hostess of the

Korren Bloem, that to "honour the king" and the laws of his making, *quand même*, comes next to the fear of God in the enactments of all the churches of Christendom. It was plain that her conscience lay in her kegs of Cognac; and to judge by the number of country curés in their three-cornered beavers and rusty gowns, whom I saw in the course of the day, trying the strength of her "*alle sorten von drank*," she could be in no need of spiritual exhortation.

I contented myself, therefore, with pursuing my inquiries into the *gestes et faits* of the heroes of Vraeschoot contrabandery; which are truly of a nature to deserve, that some descendant of Froissart, (a native of these web-footed provinces), should arise to snatch them from oblivion. Among other questions, I ventured to inquire, whether the marine smugglers of Flanders were of equal hardihood with its land marauders;—whether Nieuport and Ostend, for instance, rivalled Vraeschoot in the quality of their traditions?—

To my great surprise, the voluble old Vrouw became instantly dumb. I fancied, however,

that a significant glance towards Trincia purported to assign her daughter's presence as the cause of this sudden taciturnity; and a few minutes afterwards, the phlegmatic-looking damsel having quitted the kitchen as if to fetch fresh worsted for the stocking she was knitting, mine hostess burst forth,

"I did not care," said she, "to answer just now your question about the Nieupoorters, because of poor Trincia!—You can't have been so many days in the village without knowing her story?"

"I have heard nothing concerning your daughter, but that she is an excellent housewife, and the best lace-maker in the district," said I; feeling it unnecessary to declare how little the dull, inanimate face of the Flemish damsel had interested my inquiries.

"Well enough for that!"—replied her mother. "But surely you must have heard of her misfortune?"

The village interpretation assigned in England to the word "misfortune," as regarding persons of Trincia's age and sex, rendered my denial somewhat embarrassed.

"What!—not heard of Peter Van der Heyden?" cried the mother, apparently priding herself in her family disasters.

And this time, I was bolder in my avowals of ignorance.

"Then, I can tell you that you never heard of the bravest and best fellow who ever trod the earth or dared the sea!" retorted the old lady, with fond enthusiasm. "Never a better sailor than Peter Van der Heyden steered into the port of Nieuport; and to this day, whenever a storm stirs up the breakers betwixt the headlands and Ostend, and the signals of distressed vessels are heard in the offing, the lighthouse-keeper and water-bailiff are sure to shake their heads, and mutter the name of poor Peter Van Heyden, once the boldest and surest of their pilots!"

"*He* was not a smuggler, then?" I inquired; glancing towards the door through which Trincia had disappeared, lest she should be within hearing.

"He *was* a smuggler,—and a thriving one!" replied Vrouw Van Kerckx, stoutly, and without shame. "But you need not be afraid of that

poor soul's overhearing you!—Trincia is gone to sob away half-an-hour in her own chamber, as she is sure to do whenever there is talk before her of Nieuport and the Nieuporters. Trincia's heart is as soft as a bran-binn."

I certainly expected no such imputation of sensibility against the girl whose inexpressive countenance had disposed me against her. But, like others of hasty judgment, I have often to amend my rash decisions on men, women, and things; and am, accordingly, anxious to do justice to poor Trincia Van Kerckx, as one of the warmest-hearted individuals of my acquaintance. The fixedness of face I had so misappreciated, was, in fact, the result of despair:—the expression of a passionless heart, whose hopes are dormant in the grave,—whose life must be at best a life of duty—whose earthly happiness consists in retrospection,—and a retrospection whose cloudy distance is lost in tears! The poor creature I had seen knitting from morning till night, till I fancied her a mere machine, worthy only to fidget the bobbins of a lace-pillow or the needles of her worsted stocking, was one

of that holy army of martyrs, a broken-hearted woman, faithful to the memory of a first and only love.—Let my readers, however, work out the discovery as gradually as I did myself.

“The young man, of whom you speak so highly, was affianced, then, to your daughter?” said I to the Vrouw, when, shortly afterwards, she brought in my coffee, in a cup of enamelled Delft, almost rivalling Nankin, and by no means the worse of a certain bitter flavour of chicory, from which no coffee compounded in the Netherlands is ever free.

“Yes,—betrothed!—Had he lived two months longer, he would have been my son-in-law,—and God knows I loved him as such! I sometimes doubt whether the son born of her loins is dearer to a mother’s heart than the man who constitutes the happiness of an only daughter!” she replied in a tone of unusual emotion. “And Peter loved me, too—next, after poor Trincia, dearest in the world.—And well he might, for he had no father or mother of his own, and neither kith nor kin that cherished him as I did. I often think, as I sit by my comfortable stove

o' winter nights, and hear the wind whistling seaward over the flats, that I would give house and homestead, and all I'm worth in the world, and beg my bread for the remainder of my old days, only to have Peter Van der Heyden alive again, and my poor Trincia's face as sunny as it used to be in days of old."

"She was once lively, then, like other young people?"

"*Lively*?—There was not such a dancer at the Kermesses of the country round!—And then, for singing, the Harmonic company of St. Sebastian of Ypres sent her their silver medal. She has got it now, put by somewhere with a lock of Peter's hair, and a button or two cut from his jacket when he was taken out of the water. But we must not ask her to look at them. I never saw her discomposed but once, since the day he was buried; and that was when one of the Bruges musicians, when dining here on his way to Courtray, asked her, joking-like, for a sight of her badge. So, when she took out the little ivory box, intending to oblige him, the sight of the other treasures was too much

for her,—and down she fell her length yonder on the floor, as cold as marble. 'Twas twenty minutes or more before we could bring her back to the smallest sense of life !”

So much for trusting to appearances !—So much for the phlegmatic nature of poor Trincia Van Kerckx !

“There was every reason they should love each other dearly,” resumed the good woman, returning towards the table and her domestic troubles, after bustling about the kitchen for some minutes to conceal her emotion. “Peter, as I told you before, was an orphan, brought up at Nieuport by the brother of my late husband ; and, from a child, even before I laid poor Van Kerckx in the church-yard, Trincia used often to go over, and spend the *Kermesse* time, and other holidays, with her uncle and aunt. There, in course, she fell in with poor Van der Heyden, who was six years older than herself, and her unfailing champion in her plays and games with the Nieuport children, if hard on the stranger ; and when, at ten years old, he went to sea, Peter was sure to bring her

home, from his voyages, something or another for a keepsake,—such trifles as are had for working or striving for—a curious shell, or marten-skin, or bird, or bunch of rare sea-weed. For poor Peter, being brought up as one may say for charity, had not a doit of his own to buy presents for his little playmate.

“Her father and I thought little of such matters at the time; for young Van der Heyden, having been reared at his brother's cost, the attachment the lad testified for Trincia passed for gratitude towards her aunt and uncle. Even when the little cabin-boy grew up into a comely, strapping young fellow, the presents went on, and the liking went on, without our being a bit the wiser—old oafs that we were!—For never did the Equinoctial pipe up, but Trincia would let her knitting drop into her lap, while she sat and crossed herself with an Ave for those who travel by sea or land in such weather; and one dreadful winter, when the Greenland fleet, in which Peter Van der Heyden was embarked, was a month after its time in returning, every morning, though the snow lay a foot on the

ground, did Trincia rise by candlelight, and the first at Church for the Angelus! I was never there myself at that hour, in winter time—the more's my shame; but those who *did* go, told me how she used to kneel on the cold stones, poor child, praying and praying to God,—and to the holy apostles, who themselves suffered shipwreck in their time,—and crying all the while, as though her heart would break.”

“But her prayers were answered?” said I.
“The fleet came back at last?”

“Came back at last;—and so well did all besides her parents understand the girl's feelings, that when the first Greenlander steered into the port, after the cheers that greeted her were over, the general cry was for Trincia Van Kerckx, who had burnt so many candles at the shrine of St. Elias for its safe arrival, and watched so many hours on the shore for a sight of its well-known sails!”—

“And a happy girl she must have been! But how came you at last to discover the real nature of her feelings?”

“Why, strangely enough. In the first place,

do they keep in your country, the feast of Candlemas?"

"The Catholics of my country keep it, as well as every other festival of the Church observed in Belgium," said I; "and I think I have heard it used as a legal term in old leases of property granted before the Reformation."

Mine hostess looked puzzled,—and no wonder, for I was puzzled myself.

"But you don't observe it, I suspect, for the purpose *we* do," said she, beginning to enumerate a variety of semi-christian, semi-pagan rites and ceremonies, nearly akin to the Hallowe'en superstitions of the Scottish peasants,—more especially that of the hemp-seed sowing of the Hieland lassie, with the view of discovering the name of her future partner for life.

"Our maidens of Vraeschoot," said the good woman, "have a foolish, old fancy of baking a troth-cake, which they leave nightly on the supper table, with a knife and fork placed cross-ways, and bless it with a *Benedicite* for nine successive nights before Candlemas;—and those who have courage to enter the room as midnight

strikes twelve on the eve of Candlemas day, are said to see the shadow of their future husband sitting down to sup upon the troth cake."

"And my friend Trincia imagined she saw the figure of the bold sailor of Nieuport uncrossing the knife and fork she had laid for him?"—

"Worse, worse, a thousand times! Peter, who, from his childhood upwards, had known of this custom, and perhaps, of late, heard whispers in her uncle's house that my girl was likely to make proof of her curiosity like the rest, had the audacity, poor fellow, to undo the shutters of the house, after all the family were abed, at the risk of Van Kerckx's blunderbuss (with which he was never scrupulous when there was talk of robbers!) and made his way into the kitchen; so that, when Trincia crept down stairs at midnight for the completion of the spell on Candlemas eve, *who* should be sitting in the chair, with the cake cut in two in the dish before him, and dressed out in his Sunday suit and new glazed hat, but Peter Van der Heyden, in living flesh and blood!"

"More welcome than a thousand shadows!" said I, with the laugh expected from me.

"Her father didn't think so, I promise you;—and, though there was no longer a question of powder and shot, when, alarmed by his daughter's shrieks he rushed into the kitchen and found the arms of his brother's protégé clasped round Trincia's neck—my husband gave the young man so proper a thrashing, that poor Peter's bones must have ached for it a month or more."

"And your daughter's sympathy on the occasion of course gave grounds for suspicion that she was not displeased at the result of her Candlemas incantations?"

"This time you have guessed right!" said the good-humoured hostess. "Poor Trincia got her share of her father's strappings, for trying to interpose betwixt him and Peter; and from that day to that which witnessed their troth-plight, there was neither rest nor peace for my poor daughter."

"For a courtship that commenced so stormily," said I, "her father and mother do not

appear to have been very unrelenting. How soon was your consent obtained?"

"Alas! her poor father's consent was never obtained! It was not likely Van Kerckx should be pleased at the idea of marrying his only child to a penniless mariner; and though Van der Heyden promised, again and again, never to claim her hand till his voyages and the labour of his hands enabled him to give her a decent maintenance, my husband would not hear of it. He disliked the thought of the match and the man. The courtship began, he always said, under evil auspices. For, though a publican, Van Kerckx was a grave man, a churchwarden, and averse to jesting upon even superstitions of religious origin. 'For those who commence,' he used to say, 'with mocking the holy things that are little, will end by mocking holy things that are great;' and, truth to say; that foolish boy-and-girl joke about the troth-cake on Candlemas eve, was mightily displeasing to him."

CHAPTER II.

REMEMBERING the aphorism of a greater man than mine host of the Korren Bloem, that "he who, in his youth, derides the spilling of the salt, will, in his age, deride the overthrow of the altar," I made no comment on Van Kerckxical pragmatism; but was surprised to learn that Trincia, contrary to all continental custom, should have persevered in an attachment unsanctioned by her parents.

"Woe's my heart! she had not long for disobedience," replied the Vrouw, in answer to my remark to this effect. "Within three months Van Kerckx was in his coffin! Not, as many folks fancied, from the effects of a cold caught in jumping out of his warm bed, and rushing half-naked into the kitchen on a cold Candlemas eve, —but from a long standing liver-complaint,—

your Flemish tapsters' sure and certain ending."

"And when he was gone, you were moved to compassion by your daughter's faithful affection for her old playmate?"

"*This* time—wrong! It was the old playmate who was moved to compassion: it was I and Trincia who were to be pitied! Would you believe it?—Scarcely was my goodman in his grave, when his brother, the rich drysalter of Nieuport, who had always lived on the best of terms with us, pretended to turn me out of my house and home, on pretext of being the next male heir, according to an old custom of the canton. The law knows best on such matters; and the law, I was resolved, should decide between us. But while the plea was pending before the meeting of the court of assizes at Ypres, most people gave it against me and the poor girl, and predicted that it was all over with us; and that, having provoked the enmity of the heir-at-law on whom we were dependent, we should assuredly come to want! For as prosperous as you see us now and surrounded by

friends, (as the prosperous ever are,) I can promise you that, at the time, everybody, even our cousin Tony Van Kerckx and his wife, looked askance at us when of an evening we took our way through the town, to pray our prayer on Van Kerckx's grave, who little thought, poor fellow! to what evil he was leaving us. And *who* was it stood our friend?—*Who* dared to battle it out, pray, with the drysalter, and call his conduct by the name it deserved?—Why, even the young man who had eaten of his bread, and drunk of his cup; and who, at the certainty of being scoffed as ingrate by his fellow townsmen, ventured to turn round upon him and tell him the truth!"

"At the risk of being turned out of doors by your brother-in-law?"

"Not he!—from the moment the claim was set up, he had turned *himself* out of doors; and the first thing Peter did, on becoming homeless, was to come and offer me all the little earnings of his industry, by way of helping our plea! For you see the seals of the authorities were upon

every shred of property belonging to the deceased, till the cause should be decided in court."

"Poor fellow!—the amount of his assistance must have been moderate enough."

"'Twas all he had!—A king could have done no more! But this generosity was not all. On learning how bad were our prospects, instead of going off with the Newfoundlanders, as usual, their wages being small and their hazards also trifling, Van der Heyden, for the first time, became helmsman to a smuggling vessel; and having already a great name as a mariner, now trebled his gains, as his treble risks entitled him. All that he achieved that winter, were I to relate to you, you would not believe! All *we* suffered, while he was braving these desperate hazards, you will more readily credit. Before our cause so much as came on, poor Trincia, by want of sleep and want of appetite, was fretted to a skeleton! And yet, I don't know how it was, but when, at a year's close, and being removed from tribunal to tribunal, and swelling the gaping purses of the lawyers till our name of Van Kerckx must have been a pleasure for

them to hear,—the plea was decided in favour of the widow and daughter, she seemed to have grown so habituated to the casualties of the life Peter had embraced, or, to say the truth, was so vain-glorious of the great name his bravery had acquired along the coast, that she ceased to remonstrate against his perseverance. He had enrolled himself, for a couple of years, in a smuggling company at Nieuport, at a salary doubling what poor Van Kerckx ever gained in a year, from the best-kept tap in the district; and it was finally settled between the young folks, that he should serve out his time; and at the end on't, they were to be married, and take possession of this house, leaving me my comfortable stool by the corner of the stove for the remainder of my happy days."

"He became, in short, a desperate and notorious smuggler?"

"An *eminent* smuggler!—Ask the Comptroller of the Customs at Nieuport, if ever he had such an enemy to deal with as Peter Van der Heyden! Yes!—now I think on't, he had

one,—one who is at no great distance from you at this moment.”

Mechanically I turned towards the half-open door of the drinking-room adjoining the kitchen, expecting to see some vestige of one of those figures in frieze pilot-coats, with wide-mouthed boots and cutlass in belt, with which the children of the Belgic coast are frightened into obedience, as pirates and smugglers. But there was not so much as the shadow of a man under Vrouw van Kerckx's roof at that moment.

“There are none here to-day, but you and I,” said I. “For my own part, I plead guiltless. It must be you, then, my good hostess, who have waged war against the *douaniers* of Nieuport?”

“Look again!” replied Vrouw van Kerckx, with a smile.

I obeyed her, and still saw nothing stirring in the room but the little Dutch sentry pacing the dial of the old cuckoo clock.

“Nevertheless,” persisted she, in reply to my shrug of incredulity, “I promise you that you have one of the most desperate smugglers in

Belgium, within half a foot of your chair. Alienor!" cried she—"Alienor!" And, at her call, up started a favourite old dog, lying under a table, and went, stretching, yawning, and deliberately wagging its grizzly tail, towards her, as if reluctantly roused from some dream of former exploits. I had often noticed the passionate fondness of Trincia for the poor beast, as scarcely consonant with the sober serenity of her deportment. How was I to guess that this dog was all that remained to her of her lost lover; that its lameness was a disablement arising from a wound received in his defence?

"You have heard, I suppose, of our famous smuggling dogs?" said the Vrouw, almost as much surprised at my new avowal of ignorance as she had been at that respecting her daughter's love for Peter Van der Heyden. "Not heard of our smuggling dogs?—not seen them? Then I can tell you, you have a curious spectacle to make acquaintance with; and no one at Vraeschoot, perhaps, so well able to procure it for you as myself. In the first place, you may admire Alienor, as the very type and model of

the breed. Alienor's pups have been sold for as much as a couple of hundred francs a-piece, before they could see!"

"The price of a pony in *my* country," said I.

"Ay! but such dogs as those pups are pretty sure to turn out, would earn the worth of half-a-dozen ponies here on the frontier!" replied the Vrouw.

"I always took her for a setter," said I, beginning to examine, with some curiosity, the animal, which was affectionately thrusting its head into the roomy lap of the hostess, who, in her turn, fondly caressed its cropped ears. "Yet, on the whole, I perceive Alienor rather resembles our Northern sheep-dogs, though of stronger build."

"Strong enough, I promise you!—as you would own if you had ever seen her laden for a smuggling expedition in former days."

"With a false skin?" said I, recollecting anecdotes I had heard of lace smuggled between the two skins of a poodle, just as the despatches of Hofer were passed through the enemy's camp during the Tyrolean war.

"No! packed upon her back, like a sumpter-mule. The frontier smuggling dogs, as I was

about to tell you, having been carefully trained to the calling, are kept in packs of twenty, thirty, or more; and on the nights favourable to the purpose, loaded with contraband goods,—tea, tobacco, lace, cambric, what you will,—and loosed from the villages nearest the frontier. Off they go, at a steady trot; and are never at fault, and rarely known to come to harm; but pelt straight across the country to the houses t'other side the frontier, where they have been trained to deposit their merchandize; and, till the two countries are rich enough to afford a line of *douaniers* standing close as infantry companies on a field-day, never will they be able to defeat these shrewd and steady *contrebandiers*. Thousands and thousands of florins' worth of Flanders lace has Alienor smuggled into France, to dress out the fine ladies of Paris. —Hastn't thou, my good old wench?"—said Dame Kerckx, sportively seizing by its white beard the intelligent-looking head of the animal resting on her knee.

"And now she enjoys, it seems, the privilege of a holiday after her labours?"

“And a well-earned one!—Moreover, there are a couple of score of her race still in and about Vraeschoot, labouring in her old vocation,”—continued the hostess. “Couldn’t one swear, from the twinkling of her old eyes, she knew all I was telling you?”—

“She certainly looks very much like a Chelsea pensioner listening to old Waterloo stories!” said I.

“Ay, ay!—Waterloo, Waterloo! You English have always Waterloo in your mouths!” cried the old lady; “and sweet enough the word ought to be, to take away the bitter taste of certain other English expeditions, with which we Flemings are familiar. ’Twas in my father’s house your Duke of York lodged when he brought his guards to knock their heads against the French troops, the night before the—— But the less said on the subject the better!” said she, perceiving my countenance change. “Better talk about Alienor! *Her* victories, at least, are undeniable. Do not suppose, however, that it is in consideration of *them*, or of the profits derived from them, she has the best place by the stove, and a cut of every joint that smokes on

our table. 'Tis not for that, my poor old wench, is it, that poor Trincia knit thee the lamb's-wool rug, which now replaces, in winter time, for thy old bones, the straw good enough for thy bed so long as thou wast young and hearty? 'Twasn't for *that*, old Alienor, was it—was it?"

And at this direct appeal, the old dog began to wag its tail in double-quick time, by way of alacrity in reply.

"No, no! It was because Peter loved thee, and because thou didst love Peter. Poor Peter! —*poor* Peter!"—And at the sound of that well-known name, the faithful animal desisted from its joyous movement, and looked up wistfully into the eyes of the Vrouw, not for an instant erecting its ears, or glancing at the door, as dogs will do on mention of the name of their *living* master. Alienor knew as well that Peter Van der Heyden was gone for ever, as Trincia knew it, who had seen him laid in the grave!

"You are to know," resumed the Vrouw, once more addressing herself to me instead of the dog, "that thrice was this stanch adherent wounded in defence of her master. The ex-

plots of our smuggling dogs are not confined to land. The most valuable species is that which, like Alienor, combining a cross of the Newfoundland, takes the water boldly. For these are embarked at Nieuport and elsewhere; and, being thrown into the sea off the French coast, swim straight to land, their merchandize being packed in tin, to secure it against the salt water.—Our old favourite, here, being one of the strongest and bravest of the water dogs, and moreover the pet of the famous Peter Van der Heyden, was often admitted upon expeditions from which the rest were excluded; and twice did she save her master, the good old wench, by setting her fangs into the legs of the *douaniers*, when they were three to one upon Peter!”—

“And it was in one of these struggles he lost his life?” said I.

“I was coming to that in time. The longest story has an end, for those who have patience to wait.—But won't you try a glass of kirschegeist after your coffee, or Schiedam, five-and-twenty years in bottle? No? Well, you're right!—Genuine coffee, like ours, needs no lacing.

And, by the way, among the dry goods despatched by the Nieuporters over the frontier, is sure to be a few pounds of genuine Mocha, for the lady of the Governor of Lille, who is curious in her coffee, and won't stand Bourbon. *We* get it from Smyrna by the Maltese vessels freighted with oranges from Messina; and what you have been drinking is genuine. But, as I was saying, poor Peter, in spite of all the predictions of the government officers was *not*, at last, the victim of the coast or frontier guard. Would that it had been so! I could almost say, *would* that it had been so! I have already told you, or meant to tell you, how high and low fell upon Peter for his ingratitude towards the benefactor who had reared him, by siding with Trincia and her mother against the kinsman who unnaturally attempted to despoil them of their lawful rights;—most folks holding that, knave or honest, it was *his* duty to abide by Jehann Van Kerckx. Even when, on attaining an independence, the lad was careful to despatch to his patron, to the last doit, every florin expended on his maintenance, they still looked

upon him as an ingrate ; though, Heaven knows, as many kicks and hard words had been bestowed upon Peter, in the course of every year of his boyhood, as there are saints in the kalendar ! Still, I admit that, but for Jehann's malpractices towards his brother's widow, the lad would have remained his household slave for ever ; nay, the question being set at rest, our rights established, and Jehann proved an evil-dealer, it only-needed for him to get into trouble, for the strong arm of Peter to be uplifted in his benefactor's defence."

" And such a man as Jehann, I conclude was *often* getting into trouble ?"

" *Often* ? Better say that he was never *out* of it ! We Flemings pass in other countries for stockfish ; and, to all appearance, many of us are taciturn and phlegmatic enough. But the Flemish head that once gets a wrong turn, is warped for ever ; and the Flemish temper that once takes fire, goes mouldering on like a flax heap, smoking and smoking till all is consumed. Now, Jehann Van Kerckx had taken a spite at his brother's rightful heirs, and, of course doubly

at Peter, as our avowed champion. One unlucky night, Peter had been over to Vraeschoot to say us good-by, because about to sail for Nantes on an expedition after the next day, which was the feast of St. Sebastian, (the patron of our Flemish bowmen.) On the morrow the lugger was to set sail. Alienor was with him,—poor beast! and there he sat, just in the old ebony chair where you are sitting now, with a glass of Faro on the table before him, and the dog at his feet—asking coaxingly of Trincia, (who was down in the mouth at the thoughts of the week's absence or more that was to divide them), whether he should bring her from France a Croix de Jeannette, or a pair of the light sabots for which Brittany is famous,—and in which a duchess might dance at a coronation ball. Trincia, poor child, answered only by smiles—smiles that were so nearly like tears, if I may say so, as smiles could be. And at last, when he had been joking and funning like, about how he would be sure to dance with the prettiest girl at the *ducasse*, if there was one within five leagues of Nantes, during his stay,—my daughter,

instead of humouring the joke, as she was apt to do any joke of Peter's went straight up to him, as I never saw her do before, and drawing aside the heavy curls from his forehead, imprinted a silent kiss upon it. She has often told me since, how, all the time he was speaking, an evil omen seemed to ring in his voice;—and that, when she so abruptly gave him that unasked-for kiss, she felt as if she was pressing her lips to the dead!—For my part, I can't say I felt more on the occasion than I always felt when poor dear Peter was on the eve of a cruise; *only I must* admit that when the time came for shutting up the tap, and for Van der Heyden to take leave, and he came as usual to call for Alienor, the poor beast instead of bounding forward to his voice as she usually did, (didn't you, my lass?—didn't you, my good Alienor?)—was no where to be found; and after a long search, lo! and behold, she had skulked up into Trincia's chamber, and lay asleep beside the bed, and even made a hard ado to quit the post when summoned by her master, as though she had a presentiment of

coming evil. And who can say what instincts may be vouchsafed to dogs? We know they are truer friends than mankind—why not truer prophets? However, not to bother our brains with surmising what wiser than ourselves will never be able to decide, by eleven of the clock the house was shut, and Peter on his road, and Trincia in her bed;—not sleeping however,—for often has she tried to describe to me the restless, painful confusion of ideas that kept her eyes open the greater part of that unhappy night.”—

“Peter Van der Heyden met with mischance, then on his way back to Nieuport?”

“Not he!—He trudged gaily back, whistling through the moonlight, and arrived safe and sound in his own lodgings, beside the sea-gate of the town. But let me tell you my story in my own way. Let me tell it as it came to my knowledge. Next morning being, as you will have borne in mind, the festival of St. Sebastian, (and you doubtless remember, since you say the English Catholics observe our festivals of the Church, that St. Sebastian’s day is the 20th of January),

my daughter came down to breakfast with heavy swollen eyelids:—and when I tried to laugh her out of countenance, by taxing her with having cried over her pillow because of Peter's departure, she attributed her dejection to the cold.—And cold enough in truth it was!—Three days' frost upon the top of a heavy snow; so that such of the Vraeschoot farmers as were bound to Nieuport to assist at the mass of St. Sebastian, or the supper that was to take place afterwards, and were too lazy to walk, were forced to set off in sledges.—Well! will you believe it? Nothing would serve Trincia but she must accompany her cousin Tony Van Kerckx, who was of the number, and whose wife declared that the wind was too piercing over the marshes for *her* to venture. But *why*? said I. What would you at Nieuport? If there were prize shooting going on, or dancing, or anything worth seeing or hearing, you might go in welcome. But this supper is to take place at the coffee-house on the ramparts; and though Peter certainly said the band of the regiment in garrison would attend, to cheer the company of St.

Sebastian with military music during the repast, be assured no women will be admitted."

"I care neither for prize-shooting, nor dancing, nor drum, nor fife!" replied the girl. "I shall go straight, dear mother, to the house of Peter's sister, in the Market Place; and stay there with Aloyxia and the children, till my cousin Tony calls to take me home.

"And what then is your object in going?" said I.

"Cannot you guess, mother?"—replied Trinicia, with her white forehead nearly as red as her cheeks.

"But you saw him only last night!" I replied, rightly interpreting her blush.

"I did, I did! But if ever in your early days you parted from my father, admit that when he was away—away at a great distance—twenty-four hours' more or less of his company seemed an enjoyment to be bought with millions! I want to see Peter again before he goes. I dare not tell you, for you are in a laughing vein this morning, what a dread has come over my soul. I am not often anxious, mo-

ther ;—but I know,—yes, dear mother I feel and KNOW—that evil is at hand !—*Let me go*, I beseech you, and bid one more good-bye to Peter.”

“ I was not in the habit then, any more than I am now, of thwarting the wishes of my dutiful and excellent daughter.—So I even complied with her earnest entreaties ; and having lent her my furred *capuchon* in addition to her own quilted *faillie* of black merinos, and adjured our kinsman to be careful over her, of which I was no whit afraid, away she went with him, to be in time for the grand mass. A doleful long day it seemed to me without her ! The snow had so drifted in the night, that there was no setting foot on it ; and within doors, the stove clicked and crackled with the frost ; and that was all the sound I heard the whole day long, amid the general muffle of the weather ; unless when the carillon of Vraeschoot set up its little tinkling chime at noon, in honour of St Sebastian ; as though it chose to have a voice in the matter of the archers’ patron as well as e’er a belfry in Flanders !

CHAPTER III.

"THE latest of our Flemish carouses terminate what you English call early," resumed the Vrouw. "This bowman's banquet was to take place at four o'clock; and, with all the Faro like to be drunk on the occasion, and all the marches to be played by the band, at seven all would be over; and an hour over the snow, on such a moonlight night with a horse so stout as Tony's, would bring my daughter to my door. Nine struck, however; and, at half-past, according to custom, rang the curfew; but still, no Trin-cia! At length, I closed the house as usual, after seeing, as well as the moonlight would allow, the lights in the town expire one by one. But still,—*still* no sledge!—By degrees, I grew alarmed. Clear as was the night, the

whiteness of the snow was so dazzling, that nothing could be easier than for a driver to get off the road; and the ditches, though hard frozen, were very inadequate to bear the weight of a market-sledge. Moreover, there is a canal to be crossed twice betwixt this and Nieuport; and what with the chance of overstepping the road, undiscernable in the snow, and the probability that, having overstepped it, a driver who had been dining with half-a-hundred jovial companions, would find his way with his charge to the bottom of the canal, my mind so misgave me, that spite of the bitterness of the night, and having lent my *capuchon* to Trincia, I determined to set off and meet them by the way."

"I should have done as much in your place."

"And, oh! what piercing blasts would you have had to encounter, when, after passing the embankments of Vraeschoot, the salt marshes lay before you like a glacier! How the wind shrieked and screamed like a witch at her mischief! About half a league from the town, too,

there mingled with its shrill whistle, a still stranger noise,—the cackling of a prodigious flight of wild geese, such as is often on the wing in frosty moonlight nights, in these countries. Still I went on, and on ; but no signs of the sledge ! No marks on the snow fallen since morning, of either hoof or wheel ! Not a vehicle could have returned to Vraeschoot from the supper. This was at least some comfort. Yet I could not help fancying that some evil must have chanced in Nieuport to detain them ; and being now nerved to the cold, so that my old frame glowed again, I pursued my way ;—satisfied that one or other of the sledges,—the first I happened to encounter,—would find room for me homewards. None, however,—not one,—was I destined to meet ! and nearly two hours must have gone over my head, and more than two leagues under my feet, when at a distance, beyond the glacis, (which was imperceptible from the self-colour of the snow,) I saw the *fanal* or beacon-light of the harbour of Nieuport !—Oh ! it was a joyful sight !—not joyful, indeed, as that of the sledge would

have been, bearing back my child safe and sound, —but enough to make my old heart dance within me!

“Right glad was I to reach the gates; though little had I ever expected to approach them in the dead of night, on foot, alone, and in a mood like one distracted!—For you may guess that a thousand vague terrors on the girl's account, had, by this time, added themselves to my anxiety.—She, who had never in her born days slept a night from under my roof, save under that of her good aunt, now too much our enemy to have invited her—to play the truant thus!—What was I to think!—

“’Twas no surprise to me, meanwhile, to find the drawbridge up, and be challenged by the sentinel. ‘A friend,’ did not suffice as my password to obtain admittance. He asked my name; and when I answered Lottje Van Kerckx, instead of demanding my passport, as I expected the next affront would be, said it was ‘right well.’ Instantly, the bridge was lowered; and, as I went over and passed under the gateway, he bade me ‘haste or I should be too late,’ as

though he supposed me to be bound on some especial errand. I had half a mind to ask him whether the St. Sebastian supper had been kept up till an unusually late hour, or whether any thing sinister had occurred. But somehow or other, the question stuck in my throat.—For the life and soul of me, I could not utter a syllable !”——

“ You are agitated even now ! — Compose yourself, compose yourself ! — You shall tell me the rest of your interesting story another time ! ” said I, — trusting, however, that she would scorn to profit by the permission ; for I was greatly interested, — the more so that, from the strange eager face with which poor Alienor stood listening, almost as anxiously as myself, one might have fancied she understood every word of the narration, in which the familiar names of Peter and Trincia so often recurred.

“ I pushed my way straight to the market-place,” — resumed Vrouw Van Kerckx, — “ where abided Peter’s sister ; and so silent were the deserted streets, that the sound of my sabots on the beaten snow seemed to bring echoes from the

houses. But, if you'll believe me, eager as I was for a sight of my poor girl's face, no sooner did I come within view of the dwelling of Van der Heyden's sister, Aloyxsia, than I would have given much to be assured there was no Trincia Van Kerckx within her doors!—For late, or rather early, as it was, (the small hours were passing), and dark as was every other house and homestead in the town of Nieuport, *that one* was bright in every window! Feeling sure, therefore, that some sort of junket or festivity was going on (perhaps a masked dancing-bout, for the carnival had begun), I dreaded lest I should find my girl had, for the the first time, deceived me; and that her real errand to the town had been to join the revellers at the house of her sister in law."

"I am convinced you wronged her."

"Wronged her,—poor unhappy child!—*That* did I, indeed! So far from having a bad motive for her excursion, heaven itself must have inspired her with the impulse to visit Nieuport that day; far otherwise she had never beheld Peter Van der Heyden's loving face again!—

Those lights—those fatal lights, that streamed from his sister's windows, were the tapers burning round his corpse."

"Alas! poor Trincia!"

"She was not, at that moment, so much to be pitied; for when I entered the house, the press and movement of the strangers who filled it was towards one of the upper rooms, into which they had removed my daughter; and there she lay, lifeless as marble, on the bed, going from one fainting fit into another;—so that the doctors, who had been summoned to poor Van der Heyden, were busy by her side, suggesting first one thing, then another,—and evidently in some alarm lest all their remedies should fail. At first, you may suppose, all my care was for *her*; for, on asking the first person I met on the stairs for Trincia Van Kerckx, I was taken straight to the room where she lay by those who fancied I must, of course know all that had befallen; and so long as I saw her lie insensible before me, (an only child—I never had another,) my heart and soul were in her revival;—so that I never so much

as cared to ask what had brought her to that state. 'She was dying!' they said. To me what mattered it *why*! At last,—more than an hour after my arrival, and when the agony of my mind had changed the frozen condition in which I entered the house into such a state of excitement as made the big drops fall from my forehead like rain,—the poor child opened her heavy eyes;—yea, opened them, and knew me;—for her first movement was to raise to her lips my hand that was fondly clasping hers,—and then, the first sound she uttered was the name of poor Peter; but so faintly—so *very* faintly, that I was forced to bend down my ear to her pillow, that I might catch the words she was muttering.

"Where *is* he—where *is* Peter?" said I, turning to the person nearest me. "Can't somebody fetch him?—he was to sup with the company of St. Sebastian."

The person I addressed (one of his sister's neighbours) stared at me as though I were possessed; and put her finger to her lips in token of silence.

"Have they quarrelled, then?" said I in a whisper,—now fancying I understood the cause of Trincia's illness. "Have he and my daughter had words? No wonder the poor child is in this state!"

"No wonder, indeed!" replied the woman. "But hush!—She is conscious now, and will hear you. Do not mention his name!"

She *was* conscious: for she stretched out her poor arms towards me, till they were clasped round my neck; and, in a piteous voice, besought me to take her to Peter. I told her she was not strong enough to move; that the doctors, on quitting the house on the first symptom of her amendment, had desired she should, on no account, attempt to rise.

"I must—I MUST see him again!"—was Trincia's frantic answer.

"You shall see him, my child!—He shall come to YOU, I will send for him!" said I. "Whatever misunderstanding may have arisen between you, lovers' quarrels are but the renewing of love; and Peter will come if I make it a request of mine.—Never for a mo-

ment did he fail towards me in the duty of a son !”

“ Before I had done speaking, my poor girl's arms were suddenly unloosed from my neck ; and back she fell again upon the pillow from which she had upraised herself, as cold as a stone.

“ ‘ I warned you to hold your peace ! ’ said the woman who was assisting me. ‘ I knew her fits would come on again, if you mentioned his name ! ’

“ ‘ Why you heard her ask to see him ? *She* at least bears him no malice. If he were here, his voice would revive her twice as soon as the burnt feathers you are holding to her nose.”

“ ‘ May be, it would,—poor fellow !—But Peter Van Heyden's voice she will never hear again ! ’

“ ‘ Never hear again ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Why, is it possible you don't know what has happened ?—Listen, listen ! do you not hear the priests' voices below ? ’

“ I obeyed, and heard a mournful chanting

from the ground-floor rooms! My heart sickened within me!—It was the psalm of intercession for the dead!—

“‘Poor Aloyxsia’s first thought, when others sent for the doctor, was to send for the priests!’ observed my companion, shrugging her shoulders; ‘as if they could do anything at such a moment, except add to the general confusion!’

“My poor Peter—my own dear, precious son!” cried I, losing sight of the temporary evil before me in this far greater misfortune. “Dearest Trincia!—no wonder I find her thus!”

“‘No wonder, indeed!—and for any comfort she will henceforward find in this world, as well for her, perhaps, if she never opened her eyes again!’ replied the woman,—still continuing to bathe my daughter’s temples with vinegar. ‘They *did* love each other most dearly—ay! and from children upwards!’

“I, who was full of my own grief at that moment, could have smitten the foolish woman for seeming to say, it were better my child should have died with Peter. However, not to

keep you in further suspense, (since you can well figure to yourself all the care we bestowed on the restoration of that poor girl), suffice it, that when morning dawned, I was able to leave her for a moment, and comply with Aloyxsia's wish, that I should go, like the others, and throw holy water on the dead. But that ceremony was not enough for *me* ! Having fulfilled the duties of religion towards him, in spite of the presence of the lay vicar who remained reciting his breviary in a corner of the room, I took his clay-cold hand in mine, and parted his wet and matted locks, even as I had seen my daughter do the preceding night, to press my lips to his poor forehead,—colder than the ice I had been traversing to reach that heart-breaking spectacle ! At that moment he looked so tranquil, so happy, there was such a sweet, melancholy smile upon his countenance,—that one might almost have thought he enjoyed the grief we were enduring. Yet I felt that never, in his life-time, had I loved him as I did *then* !—My child that was to have been !—My brave, kind, thoughtful, devoted son !”

And covering her face with her clasped hands Vrouw Van Kerckx began to sob distractedly, as though the dreadful scene were again passing before her ; while poor Alienor, moved by her distress, and seemingly understanding its origin, uttered a sort of low whining cry, till the good woman recovered herself sufficiently to withdraw one of her hands from her face, and place it caressingly on the head of the faithful dog.

“Poor Alienor might tell you all this as well as I, if she could speak !” she resumed, after fondling the animal ;—“for there she lay, at the foot of the table on which they had placed the body of her master ;—shivering with the freezing waters she had not courage to shake from her coat,—shivering and miserable, conscious as any present that the kindly soul on which she was dependant, was gone for ever,—that she should never be caressed again by the hand of Peter Van der Heyden !—Lord—Lord !—why do I dwell upon it all !—How have I the *heart* to dwell upon it !”

“Let us say no more, then, on the subject,” said I ; “though, I confess, I am most

eager to learn how that brave fellow came by his untimely end?"

"Why, from his own good-heartedness! At that accursed supper, (where, would that he had never set his foot!) Jehann Van Kerckx, who was present among the rest of his townsmen, got into a foolish quarrel with Klaus, the tanner of Vraeschoot, who sat next him,—no matter about what,—he was always quarrelling and brawling!—and as they were leaving the house, the squabble was renewed upon the threshold, and ended in a violent scuffle. Jehann's antagonist was a tall, stout man; whereas my brother-in-law is a poor, meagre creature, who soon got the worst of it; and they went on struggling and cuffing along the glacis, on which the house of entertainment, where they had been supping, is situated, till Peter, perceiving his old patron in sore distress stepped forward and warned the tanner to take his hands off. But they had all been drinking more than their stint and, so far from desisting, the fight was renewed and Peter again forced to interfere,—upon which the son of Klaus turned upon him; and in so

cowardly a manner, that the blow he dealt upon him from behind, (while Peter, after extricating, Jehann Van Kerckx, was attempting to pacify the furious tanner), so threw him off his guard, that down he rolled straight from the glacis into the ditch below ;”

“ Into one of those dreadful moats,—the precipitous walls of which are inaccessible !”

“ At any other season of the year, Peter would have swam round the fortifications to the draw-bridge, and got the sentries to hold down a musket, to which he might have clung and been saved. But the fall from a height of thirty feet upon the ice, probably stunned him ; and when his weight crashed at once through the ice into the chilly waters below, he went straight to the bottom, and, betwixt the cold and the injuries received in his fall, never recovered his senses ! Meanwhile, this noble dog, on seeing her master disappear, made but a single spring after him ; and plunging through the fissure in the ice, dived again and again, till she brought him, with her teeth fixed in his coat, to the surface. By that time succour had arrived.—

Several soldiers of the artillery pushed their way through the casemates of the fortifications, reached the ice with boat-hooks, and, as all was clear as day for their operations, those above could distinctly see the efforts made for the recovery of the poor fellow's body,—which might still, they trusted, be revived.

“They did not think so long! When, at last, after innumerable defeated efforts, they managed to extricate him from under the ice, he was removed to the old Dutch barracks of the artillery, and submitted to the treatment already in preparation for him at the suggestion of the hospital surgeons. But it was soon discovered, from the countenances of these gentlemen, that even had not the submersion for twenty minutes in that icy water been necessarily fatal, the injuries to the skull, occasioned by the fall, would have rendered their efforts unavailable. They tried, however,—in order to satisfy the minds of the assistants:—for to every soul in Nieuport was the name of the brave Peter Van der Heyden dear!—not only for his daring, but for the noble devotion with which

he had twice perilled his life in the harbour, for the rescue of drowning mariners; and once carried out a rope, through the wildest surge of the most fearful of equinoctial hurricanes, to an English vessel in distress.—But it was all to no purpose. At the end of an hour, they summoned four of their men to remove the body from the room, heated with stoves, in which it had been deposited, and convey it to the residence of his sister!—

CHAPTER IV.

"A concourse of hundreds, deploring and lamenting, followed the body from the barracks to Aloyxsia's abode. It was so hard a fate for the brave fellow who had so often confronted death in an honourable manner, to die like a dog, drowned in a ditch of the fortress !"

"He died in defence of a fellow creature," said I. "Surely you could not desire a happier death for—" I was about to say "smuggler,"—but checked myself in time to add,—“for your daughter's betrothed ?”

"I don't know,—perhaps I am wrong ;—but for a noble fellow like Peter Van der Heyden to die in defence of a pitiful, heartless rogue, such as Jehann Van Kerckx, seemed to me then, ay, and seems now,—a miserable waste of human life."

"Many a seeming waste of human life is, for its own wise purposes, decreed by providence," said I; "witness that battle of Waterloo, to which you accuse us English of evermore reverting."

But having spared the reader much of the homely eloquence of mine hostess of the Korren Bloem, let me be equally chary of my homilies; adding only that, before she had half described the touching ceremony of Peter's funeral, her daughter re-entered the room,—still with her usual stolid, changeless face, which, as an effort of self-government, now acquired the highest interest in my eyes. It was as much as I could do to refrain from starting up and taking her by the hand, in token of reverence for her sufferings, and regret for having so imperfectly estimated her nature. I forbore, however, in deference to a sign from her mother; but still more, because I felt it would be sacrilege to intrude upon the sacred quietude into which the voluntary widow had chosen to subside.

That evening, when Trincia, according to custom, was giving Alienor her supper, and in-

stalling her afterwards on her rug for the night, Vrouw Van Kerckx entered my room to conclude, according to her promise, her history of the morning. There was little more, however, to tell. It was not from *her* I had to learn that one of the greatest outlays of luxury among the modern Flemings, as in all countries where the ascendancy of the priests is considerable, lies in their funerals ;—and that sixty or seventy pounds sterling are often expended on the interment of a tradesman who, in his lifetime, found a year's maintenance in the sum.

“I chose,” said the old lady, “that Peter should be laid in the grave as if he had been a son of my own,—as in affection, mutual affection, God knows he was ; and can promise you that all the choir from the Dominicans of Ostend came over for the celebration. There had not been such a burial in Nieuport since the death of its last burgomaster !

“‘Let it be a ceremonial as for my bridal!’ said poor Trincia. ‘Expend upon the altar, mother, all you would have done had your child stood there by *his* side who now lies cold and

stiff in the aisle; for never, NEVER will she stand there with another man! 'And well has she kept her word; and, I fear, will keep it to the end;—for not a year goes by, but Trincia has her suitors,—partly as heir to the property of Van Kerckx, but more, I verily believe, out of respect for her faithfulness of heart. She waits upon old Alienor, you perceive, as though it were a child left her by Van der Heyden;—and I often shudder to think how desolate her life will be, when the faithful animal drops off, as in the course of nature she soon must;—to say nothing of the old mother, who cannot long survive the old favourite!—And, by the way, among the many grievous circumstances that rendered Peter's funeral so touching a spectacle (attended, two by two, by all the mariners of the port,—government sailors and all, noted smuggler though he was),—was his faithful dog,—his famous, well-known dog,—following at a distance even to the church-yard;—ay! and jumping into the grave into which the coffin was lowered. And though they dragged her out, and one of Aloyxsia's young

sons brought her home to us in a string, that we might carry her back here with us to Vraeschoot, next morning, as I was busy watching beside Trincia's bed who had fallen into a sore fever, Alienor managed to slip her collar and make off to the fortress ;—and before I found time to apprise Aloyxsia's family of her loss, she was found by the sexton whining beside the grave of her old master !—She had found out the exact spot, though a heavy snow had fallen on it in the course of the night !”

“And was nothing done,” I inquired, “to punish those whose disorderliness was the cause of poor Peter Van der Heyden's untimely end ?”

“Nothing,—that is, nothing to be called a legal infliction. They were arrested, and the particulars of the conflict minutely inquired into before the burgomaster of Nieuport. But the tanner is his distant cousin ; and so, though it was proved that Peter came by his death in the course of their squabble, he had interest enough to get it believed that Peter was the worse for his carouse ; though twenty sufficient witnesses

were ready to swear that the poor fellow was as sober as the burgomaster. After a reprimand from the police on the subject of brawling and disturbing the public peace, therefore, the offenders were discharged. But the Society of St. Sebastian took justice into their own hands; and, by way of tribute to the memory of the dead, expelled both my brother-in-law and Klaus the tanner, from their company, by common acclamation,—ay, even though the burgomaster himself was present at the meeting;—and to this day, every 20th of January, in addition to the solemn masses I cause to be performed at Nieuport and Vraeschoot, the memory of the brave Peter Van der Heyden is drunk in solemn silence at the coffee-house on the glacis.”

My readers will, perhaps, have had enough of Vrouw Van Kerckx and her son-in-law; and conclude that, the latter having died like a dog in the ditch of the citadel of Nieuport, they have heard the last of my Netherlandish Romeo and Juliet. But I must entreat further indulgence; for *now* commences the most romantic part of my romance,—or rather its

most real reality, according to my personal witnessing. •

Long after I had completed my collection of marsh bulbs, and quitted Vraeschoot, the memory of these people pursued me. There was something so touching in the quiet, persevering grief of that silent Flemish girl, something so warm in the sympathy of the mother, and, above all, something so striking in the intelligence of the dog, (apparently as faithful a partner in the family grief as either of the others), that I thought of poor Peter Van der Heyden, not only when visiting the fortifications of the little harbour of Nieuport and its miserable church-yard, (for the higher families of Flanders being interred in churches, their cemeteries are of the meanest description,) but when pursuing my examination of those quaint old cities of Flanders and Hainault, which, in addition to their connexion with English history, contain worlds of interest for the ponderer over days that are done. I began to regret I had not made a sketch of the trusty Alienor to send to my friend Edwin Landseer, in order to

increase his collection with the type of a species worthy to afford a new subject for his exquisite pencil.

Nor had I lost sight of this purpose, when, shortly after the commencement of the present year, I read in the Brussels papers, an account of —“ A riot at VRAESCHOOT !”

A riot at stagnant, sluggish, lifeless, voiceless, Vraeschoot ! The idea of an *émeute* among the mummies of the Great Pyramid, would not have appeared more incongruous,—or in the Shaker village described by Boz,—or in the monastery of La Trappe ! The fact, however, was incontestible ; being formally announced by the organs of government of King Leopold ; and I fear that rumours of riots at Paisley or Manchester, would not have so much excited my curiosity. I inquired of the men in authority, most likely to have information on the subject, the nature and origin of the *émeute* ;—when lo ! like men in authority of all countries, they replied that they “ knew nothing about the matter,—not having read the day’s papers ;” and after tormenting governors and secretaries

(scarcely cognizant of the existence of the unimportant little place in which I took so deep an interest), I was forced to suspend my curiosity till the *Emancipation* and *Indépendent* newspapers, chose to afford a supplement to their "curtailed abbreviation" of provincial intelligence.

After all, my presentiments had not deceived me; the dogs of Vraeschoot *were* the cause of the disturbance! It was a frontier affair,—a question of customs and excise; and one of the strangest, perhaps, that ever exercised the collective wisdom of the Belgian Home Department.

As Vrouw Van Kerckx had repeatedly informed me, the great injury arising to the revenues of the kingdom, from the extensive system of smuggling carried on by means of the frontier dogs, had determined the emissaries of government not to allow another winter to pass over, without striking a blow at the root of the evil. But it was found much easier for the coast-guard to lay their hands on the *men* engaged in the perilous career of smuggling,

than upon the four-footed coadjutors ; and the collector of customs at Nieuport was even heard to say, that his department would derive little benefit from the untimely end of the famous Peter Van der Heyden, so long as the race of his equally celebrated dog was suffered to infest the country.

During my short sojourn at Vraeschoot, I had certainly occasion to note the beauty and number of these fine animals ; more especially of a noble fellow named Moeghy, who used to accompany his master, a notorious smuggler, to the hostel of the Korren Bloem, and was often brought to my room by Trincia as the handsomest specimen of the breed, and greatly resembling the earlier days of his grandame Alienor,—with whom he was so great a favourite, that she allowed him to share her place besides the stove,—a distinction she was never known to accord to any other of the canine species.

The government officers, however, surveying poor Moeghy and his brethren with other eyes than those of a Landseer, were resolved on the

extermination of him and his. One night, one ill-omened night, in the month of January, 1843, a heavy snow fell on the morning of a day when they had certain information of the Vraeschoot dogs having been despatched over the frontier with a cargo the previous night; and the custom-house officers felt pretty sure that the track of the dogs over the snow, on their return laden with French merchandize, would enable them to lay hands upon the outragers of the law in *flagrante delicto*. Though these functionaries would have been, of course, unauthorised in seizing the dogs while following their masters on the public way, (there being no especial clause in the Belgian code, for the arrest of dogs "on suspicion,") they felt that, convicted in the act,—arrested with bales of Cambray cambric on their back, or Artesian tobacco, or Grenoble gloves, or any other species of contraband goods,—there was warrant of execution on the very face of the affair.

On the night in question, accordingly, both *douaniers* and gendarmes were astir,—some mounted, some a-foot,—along the various lines

of communication between the less-guarded portion of the Flemish frontier and Vraeschoot; nor had they been long on the watch, before one of the gendarmes came galloping to a cattle-hovel where three of the *douaniers* had taken up their station, with intelligence that he had made out the track of a pack of between twenty and thirty dogs; and that by accompanying him across an adjoining coppice, they might intercept the course of the delinquents. In a moment, they were on the move; and having arrived on the opposite outskirts of the plantation, stationed themselves stealthily, with a species of lasso from hand to hand, so that the dogs could not fail to run into their toils.

Scarcely had they taken up their position, when, at a distance, a dark object became discernible on the snow; and by degrees, though muffled in sound, they could hear the trot of the dogs and the panting of their breath under their burthens.—Ten minutes more, and the rich prize was captured;—seven-and-twenty dogs, richly laden with an endless variety of

French merchandize!—The poor animals, hampered as they were, were dragged across the coppice into the hovel; where they were unloaded and tied to one of the cattle stalls while the gendarme galloped off to Vraeschoot, to procure a horse and cart for the removal of the confiscated property to the custom-house depôt.

Before morning, all was safely lodged;—the goods in the warehouses of the Douane, the dogs in the burgomaster's yard; where they kept up so piteous a howling, that had not the intelligence of their capture already transpired, this grand disaster to the smuggling trade would soon have made itself known to their masters, who dared not utter a syllable in defence of their lawful, but lawless property. The only drawback, meanwhile, to the delight of the *employés* in the success of their enterprise, was the fact that, on their road from the scene of action to Vraeschoot, two of the dogs had managed to make their escape! Twenty-five, however, remained,—twenty-five noble animals, which Snyders or Hondekoeter would have

realized thousands of florins by painting; and which, even crest fallen as they looked when brought up in a string to the ignoble tribunal of a village burgomaster, were still a study for the artist or the huntsman. Such quarters!—such chests!—such muscle!—such vigour! The chief of the custom-house officers, who attended to support with his attestations the *procès verbal* of the gendarme, was not far wrong in estimating the value of this portion of the capture alone, (integrally, and without reference to its effects on the contraband trade of the town), at seven thousand florins; the lowest value of each dog, computed in English money, being ten or twelve guineas. For their specific purpose, of course, their price was beyond rubies.

Nevertheless, this noble pack no sooner made its appearance before the authorities of justice, than it was condemned to death, by acclamation as unanimous from burgomaster, clerk, gendarmes, and *douaniers*, as that which had ejected Jehann Van Kerckx and the Tanner from the company of the Toxopholites of Nieuport.—It

was decided that the offending dogs of Vraeschoot were to die the death of a dog!

The "death of a dog," however, though proverbial, is an indefinite phrase; and though commonly understood to designate the halter, certain it is, that for every hundred dogs hung in the course of twelve calendar months, thousands are shot and poisoned. In the month of July, in all Christian communities, more especially, as much *Nux vomica* is applied by the constituted authorities to secure the population from hydrophobia, by exterminating all dogs stupid enough to allow themselves to be poisoned, as might have served the purposes of Madame de Brinvilliers, or one of the Papal family of the Borgias.

When the question of life and death came, however, to be discussed by the Lycurgus of Vraeschoot, either the manner of execution was predetermined, or he felt it unnecessary to burthen the civil budget of the town with the price of a halter, or an ounce of arsenic. The dogs were condemned to undergo military execution. What better, indeed, had the company of in-

fantry, quartered at Vraeschoot, to do with their powder and shot?—

This knotty point decided, the “where” became as critical a question as the “how” and “wherefore;” but as it appeared the burgomaster’s family had already undergone sufficient persecution from the howling of the imprisoned dogs in his premises, a more convenient locality was to be selected for the ensuing massacre.

“Let them be taken to Klaus, the tanner’s yard!” said the man of authority. “Being on the outskirts of the town, the discharge of musketry will cause less disturbance to the inhabitants.” To which suggestion the collector of the customs judiciously added, that the dogs, being now an item of government property, for which he had to account, the carcasses would be conveniently on the spot to be sold to the tanner for skinning, in case he felt inclined to secure the bargain.

Though the burgomaster’s tribunal contained no reporter’s gallery to record this summary decree, it was a sufficiently open court for malcontents to be present; and a general murmur became

audible at the idea of these noble dogs, the treasure of many households, being shot like curs, and sold to the currier. Certain of the unsuspected owners themselves were probably present, for there was something of a tender yearning, resembling that of the mother in the judgment of Solomon, in the suggestion audible from that rude assemblage of boors, to "send the poor dogs to Nieuport, and embark them, for the benefit of government in the first vessel sailing to some distant port."

But the authorities knew better. Less cunning convicts than these marauders have been known to return from transportation, and recommence their course of crime; and the burgomaster and collector consequently decided that dead dogs wag no tails; and that the frontier would not be half so safe with its canine enemies at Cape Cod or Malaga, as worn in shoes by the women and children of Vraeschoot. The verdict was accordingly "death;"—the place of execution, the tanner's yard;—the orders to the soldiery, like Macheath's,—“To your arms, brave boys, and load!”

The utmost I was able to gather further on this subject, at Brussels, whether from newspapers or hearsay, did not exactly explain the origin of the confusion that ensued. All I could learn was, that on their way to the tanner's yard, (the identical tanner whose unpopularity in the town, fostered by the antipathy of Vrouw Van Kerckx and her daughter, arose from his share in the death of Peter Van der Heyden), the gendarmes were assailed by the populace with hootings and peltings; that they had some difficulty in accomplishing their entrance into the tannery; and finally, that on the arrival of three rank and file of the infantry company, with their muskets loaded to do this ignominious piece of execution, they were so set upon by the mob, that, at one time, it appeared likely there might be a necessity in self-defence, for substituting bipeds for quadrupeds.

"And no wonder!" added my Flemish informant. "Seven thousand florins is in itself no trifling loss to a poor town of the frontier that might more honestly call itself village. But these dogs had a fifty fold value. Ten years'

training would scarcely recomplete such a pack. Accustomed to travel together, they were as sure, surer perhaps, than a government courier,—regular as a railroad,—steady as time. To such a population as that of Vraeschoot, the loss would have been utter ruin.”

“They were saved, then?” said I, clinging to the conditional mood in which the opinion was expressed, in earnest hope that Alienor’s descendants might be on an outward-bound voyage, to visit their distant relations in Newfoundland, embarked in some vessel belonging to the Ostend Cod fishery.

“Saved,—when legally condemned to death? You count too much on the magnanimity of burgomasters!” replied my informant. “Respites and reprieves are seldom heard of in village tribunals. No, no! An example was wanting,—an example was given! The century that shot Marshal Ney, could have no good excuse for pardoning the smugglers of Vraeschoot. There was a struggle,—a sad disturbance. The burgomaster’s wig is said to have been torn off, and the tanner’s palings to have been torn down.

One account said something of a woman having been seriously wounded at the moment of the execution of the dogs.—But this wants confirmation. Next year, some of us may chance to be walking in their skins ;—which I should have been plaguily sorry to be, by the way, after they had received sentence of the utmost rigour of the law from the Vraeschoot council of war.”

And thus, apparently, my insight into this episode of Flemish life was to end with a bad joke ! But enough had transpired to render the subject one of considerable interest ;—for I must plead enormously guilty to the philo-canine boss, if any such exist among the subdivisions of phrenological physiology ;—a weakness no one, more especially no writer of fictions need blush to own,—since it is shared with the three first romanciers of the age,—Scott,—Byron,—Beckford. Frankly, then, I am an enthusiastic lover of intelligent dogs ; and, but that I have young children constantly around me, should never be without some four-footed favourite by my side, as before such pets were subjected to rivalry with pets still dearer.

The other day, therefore, when about to embark for England, at the distance of only a few leagues from Vraeschoot, I devoted a few hours to a second visit to the little town, for the sole purpose of procuring Alienor's portrait, as progenitress of a race apparently in as much hazard of extinction, as any other race, canine or human, opposed to the purposes and rights of powers that be.

I was not without hope that my friend Moeghey might be the fortunate dog rescued from the carnage which caused the quiet inhabitants of Vraeschoot to rise against their constituted authorities ; and that, like other delinquents, he might have skulked back to his native place, now that the storm was blown over. For Moeghey would make a noble subject for a pendant to that early picture of Landseer, (in the gallery at Ilam), representing the rescue of frozen travellers by the dogs of St. Bernard.

But what a melancholy spectacle did the little Flemish oasis of the marshes now present ! Stripped of its deceptive summer verdure, it

seemed to stand in a wilderness of plashy pools, such as might drive the very frogs into an ague!—Canal and ditches alike overflowing,—the dykes themselves under water,—the whole surface of the country looking like a cracked and clouded looking-glass of vast dimensions.

The driver of the *patdche* I had embarked in—a word most appropriate to the operation and the scene,—encouraged me, however, to proceed; and, partly from a spirit of curiosity to ascertain how the amphibious inhabitants of this watery waste kept up their spirits against its influence and exhalations, I managed to arrive about noon at the door of the Korren Bloem,—so that the sun and I made our appearance together. But its brightness seemed as much out of place as it appears to land-lubberly eyes when shining on the ocean, out of sight of land. Sunshine seemed to have nothing to do among the dreary pools of Vraeschoot!

Yet on reaching the village inn, I was forced to admit that it stood in need of all the cheering which extrinsic brightness can

bestow. It was no longer the same place ;—no longer orderly,—no longer comfortable. The sanded floor of the kitchen had not, I suspect, been renovated for weeks ! The brass knobs of the stove, and the brazen culinary utensils, instead of being bright as the gold of Ophir as when I saw them last summer, were now tarnished and dull. Even the Almanack which, carefully suspended, used to constitute one of the chief ornaments of the room, was hanging slovenliwise from the wall, having lost one of the nails that preserved its equilibrium ; nay, but that I scarcely hope good housewives will credit the assertion, I would add that the little German sentry which had been performing its peregrinations there ever since the days of the Duke of York and Valenciennes, was, at length, at a stand still !—For it was so. All was going wrong.—Even the cuckoo clock had stopped !

“Worse and worse !” muttered I, thoroughly discomfited in my turn, on perceiving that neither the hostess nor Trincia were at home, while even Alienor had deserted her accustomed

place by the stove; and, to the best of my ability, I tried to make myself understood by the slipshod Flemish damsel, who was pretending to skim some broth in a pipkin on the stove, in that detestable mongrel language, which is neither High Dutch nor Low,—yet to which French and English are more indebted than they care to own.

But the poor girl answered me only by mournfully shaking her head, and muttering a few broken words, of which I could only put together “Trincia” and “fever.” The young lady of the house was probably suffering from one of those severe attacks of ague, so common among the inhabitants of the district; and the exterior influence of which has earned for them the opprobrious name of the “death’s heads of Ypres.”

I now asked to see Vrouw Van Kerckx; but, still shaking her head, she intimated that her mistress never quitted her daughter. I even asked for Alienor,—and then, indeed, the surprise and consternation of the girl exceeded all bounds; as she raised her hands and tearful

eyes to Heaven, with an exclamation of profound amazement that there should exist a human being still ignorant of the fatal fact—that *Alienor was no longer in existence!*

In that one word, the illness of Trincia was explained: the absence of the hostess, the dinginess of the brass knobs, and the crookedness of the Almanack. Alienor—poor Alienor!—the last relic in this world of Peter Van der Heyden!—The last—the last!—

On perceiving the earnestness of my sympathy, the girl flew to summon her mistress; and Vrow Van Kerckx, on learning my arrival, was in equal haste to greet me; for well did she remember my former interest in her domestic troubles, and right glad was she to have secured an auditress for the few remaining pages of that sad romance.

“When you were last here,” said she, after having dried up the first burst of tears that accompanied her intimation of poor Trincia’s illness,—nay, of her danger, “I told you, if you recollect, that Alienor was the dearest object in this life to my poor child; and that I

knew not how it would chance with her, when she survived the faithful creature that seemed so much a part of Van der Heyden. But I never thought it would come to this,—no!—I never, never thought it would come to this! There she lies, in the chamber above,—the doctors scarcely promising she will survive another week!—A low fever is eating her strength away, and all from that accursed wound! Even should she survive, Trincia will be lame for life.”

“What accursed wound?” cried I, in astonishment.

“You have not heard?—you know nothing of our new misfortune?”—

“I have just heard from your servant, that—”

“That Alienor is gone,—that Alienor *has been murdered!*” cried the Vrouw, throwing herself into her usual arm-chair, for the indulgence of another burst of tears. “At least you know, that these wretched *douaniers* entered into a conspiracy to ruin the poor people of Vraeschoot, by destroying their trade—”

"Their contraband trade,"—said I faintly.

"And shooting their dogs,—poor, innocent, dumb creatures ;—who, whatever their masters had done, had committed no offence against the king or his government. With malicious cunning, they inveigled them into a springe, and brought them into the town ; and one morning, (it was precisely the morning of St. Sebastian's Eve) !—I was woke with the news that two gendarmes were in the kitchen, laying violent hands upon Alienor. In a moment, I sprang out of the room, and was nearly thrown down on the landing by the poor dog, who, having escaped from her enemies, was bounding up to take refuge under Trincia's bed, with the gendarme in his jack-boots clattering up stairs after her.

"My daughter, who was braiding her hair at the time, half in her night-dress, came forward with her usual gentle demeanour, to inquire what harm her dog had done ;—fancying that, gainsaying her nature, Alienor might have been tempted to worry some neighbour's favourite cat, or break into a rabbit hutch. But when

the man replied, that 'the dog was one of the smuggling pack, and, having been captured the previous night among the rest, had broken her bonds, and escaped to our house, for that he had traced her, furlong by furlong, by her foot-prints in the snow,' I, for my part, not dreaming the seriousness of the case, burst into a loud fit of laughter! This so exasperated the fellow, that he was for forcing his way into the chamber, and seizing the poor dog. But with mild steadiness, Trincia laid her hand on his sleeve; and assured him, in simple, earnest words, that the dog had rested all night on a rug by her bed-side, and could not be the animal of which he was in quest.

"He chose, however, to have a sight of Alienor with his own eyes; and, though he pretended to give way to the force of my daughter's asseverations,, I suspect he found stronger arguments still in the sharpness of poor old Alienor's white fangs, which she took care to show him when he approached where she lay, growling and grinning under the bed of her mistress. At all events, he suffered himself

to be persuaded, and made off at last to support his comrades in their *proces verbal* before the burgomaster; muttering, however, as he quitted the kitchen, (even after a glass of our best Schiedam,) that, as sure as Heaven was above all, one of the smuggling dogs *had* been tracked to our door, whose footprints would measure to a hair's-breadth with those of Alienor!—

“ Well,—will you believe it?—so besotted were we with our own knowledge of the poor dog's innocence of the offence laid to its charge, that, instead of doing as any reasonable being would have done, and carrying it off instantly to Nieuport, that it might be out of the way in case of further inquiry,—so thoroughly was Trincia overpowered by the danger Alienor had run, that down she sat on the kitchen floor, by the side of the poor dog, trembling in every limb, and weeping like a child; while the faithful animal licked her hand, and looked up in her face, as if in gratitude for her interference in its behalf. Every time I called to her to rise and finish dressing, and come to breakfast like a reasonable Christian, this scene of tenderness

between them was renewed ;—my daughter weeping for joy, and the poor old dog looking wistfully up into her face by way of thanks,—thanks to her who should have been the bride of its lost master !—

“ ‘Forgive me, mother !’ said she,—‘forgive me ! But it seems as if *he* had been alive again, and in danger, and rescued. My poor Peter ! On this day, too, of all the days of the year,—the day of St. Sebastian,—the day of my widowhood ! Oh ! mother, mother !—what should I have done, had they deprived me of Van der Heyden’s old companion, who watched beside his grave, which all others had deserted ?’

“And so, she hid her face again in the grizzly coat of the faithful old beast ; and even I, who had been laughing at first, could not keep a dry eye when I saw how sadly she was in earnest.

“All this was not over, when the girl came running in to tell us that the smugglers’ dogs were going to be shot in the tanner’s yard, and that the same gendarme was returning from the

burgomaster's towards our house. For my part, I did not much care; knowing that Alienor had no more part in the enterprise for which the animals were to suffer, than King Leopold on his throne. But I saw from Trincia's face that *she* was uneasy; and when the gendarme entered the kitchen, the first thing he did was to hold out a paper containing a warrant, signed by the burgomaster himself, to take and 'shoot the dog of Widow Kerckx of the Korren Bloem, Alienor by name, find it when and where he might.'—A municipal warrant for the 'execution of a dog!—Heard ever man the like of such a thing?

“‘This is Klaus the tanner's doing!’ cried I; for you are to know, that he had found audacity to renew, after Van der Heyden's death, the addresses he had paid to my daughter in her father's lifetime; and as it was still without success, he took a spite against poor Alienor, as serving only to remind Trincia Van Kerckx of the lover it was his interest she should forget. *He* always chose to assert, that the quarrel with Jehann, in which poor Peter so

haplessly interfered, arose from his zealous advocacy of our rights against my brother-in-law ; and was never weary of taxing us with the ingratitude of our resentments. Altogether, the occasion tempted him ; and the only conditions, accordingly, on which he agreed to lend his yard for the massacre of the dogs, (which, it was well-known would be an unpopular measure), was, that the whole five-and-twenty should be forthcoming ; — protesting to the burgomaster, that the gendarme had suffered himself to be taken in, and that the dog tracked to our house ought to be executed among the rest.

“Leave but *one* of them alive,” argued he, “and the owners of the others have a right to feel themselves aggrieved, and lodge a complaint with the king’s proctor against the execution ! —to say nothing of the peril of leaving such a nest-egg for future mischief.—Exterminate the race of these smugglers in Vraeschoot, or you do nothing !”

“Such was the origin of the warrant ; and the gendarme, to whom it was delivered for

execution, having received a hint from the burgomaster that he had suffered his eyes to be blinded to Alienor's delinquency by the potency of the Schiedam of the Korren Bloem, he made his second appearance in a brutal mood, resolved to redeem his character as a guardian of the public weal, by showing no mercy towards the poor dumb animal.

"But, when he attempted to seize the poor victim by the scuff of her neck, you should have seen our dear, quiet Trincia, start up and defy him! No mother in defence of her child ever struggled more ferociously! But, bless you! what avails the struggling of a feeble girl against a great, iron-armed, ruthless gendarme? As well have attempted to smite down, single-handed, the sea-dyke of Ostend! With a firm gripe, he swung the dog into the air, (after stunning it with the butt end of his musketoon;) and having thus gained possession, was stalking out of the kitchen, when Trincia threw herself down on the ground under his feet, and offered him bribe upon bribe, guilder upon guilder, to spare the dog,—so that his acceptance of her

terms would have left our savings'-box empty as a beggar's walle. But all in vain,—all—*all* in vain! I was forced to drag the poor girl away, or she would have been trampled down by his heavy boots as he rushed across the threshold.

“The snow still lay white upon the ground; and Trincia was only but half-dressed, just as she quitted her room for the first encounter with the gendarme. But, without heed to weather or appearances, forth rushed my daughter after the gendarme, at whose heels, as he went along with poor Alienor flung over his shoulder, all the populace of the town was fast gathering!—To *them* did Trincia address herself;—calling upon them to rescue Peter Vander Heyden's faithful old dog, which, though it had not stirred from our stove-side these six years past, was going to be slaughtered on a false pretence of smuggling.

“Most of them knew the truth of this; and those who knew it not of themselves, could not doubt the truth of what was urged by the poor, frantic creature they saw rushing, half-naked,

through the snow, to save the life of a poor, feeble dog. And so, by degrees, murmurs began to grow, and the boys took up stones to pelt the gendarmes; and I, who, having thrown on my cloak, was panting after them as fast as my old legs would allow me, had much ado to prevent their proceeding at once to acts of violence.

“ You know the tanner’s yard,—at the end of Lange Straat, towards the Canal?—Well!—by the time the fellow reached the spot with that dear, precious, old burthen, the premises were surrounded by the crowd. It could not be of Trincia’s gathering,—for, as yet, *they* knew nothing of her story. Oh, no! The owners of the unfortunate animals about to be butchered in cold blood, had stirred up the feelings of their fellow-townsmen;—who swore that the burgomaster had exceeded his authority,—that he had no right to destroy the property of Belgic citizens without trial by jury and legal award.

“ And when those who managed to overtop the palings of the tannery caught sight of the

troop of dogs, poor things, huddled together, half-frozen and half-famished, after their night's exposure, and saw the soldiers deliberately loading their muskets, such a shout of execration was raised on the spot as might have been heard at half a league's distance.

"Now, all this, take notice, was before *we* arrived,—so that, we had neither art nor part in the first movement of the people. But when they saw the gendarme push his way with Alienor through the tanner's gates, and slam them in the face of my poor, sobbing Trincia, and gathered from her wild outcries that the poor beast about to be so shamefully sacrificed, was Peter Van der Heyden's old dog,—the dog, whose fidelity was as well-known in all the country-side as her own,—then, indeed, their indignation broke out with a vengeance!—For Trincia Van Kerckx is beloved here at Vraeschoot, according to the deserts of a good and charitable creature, never weary of ministering to the wants of her fellow-creatures; and, I warrant you, there was not a man in all that mob, for whose wife, or mother, or child, she had

not, at one time or other, done some act of mercy. So without a moment's pause, they swore to rescue the dog ;—and, oh !—you should have heard the crash of the tanner's palings, instantly thrown down by the mob as though they were of paper !—

“ But, well-a-day !—that crackling burst was instantly succeeded by an explosion louder still ;—and, knowing what was to come of it, that discharge of musketry seemed to go through my very heart !—And then, such a hideous howl from such of the poor victims as were only wounded,—and such a shout of fury from the owners, who had been too late to rescue them !—As quick as enabled the soldiers to reload their pieces, came another discharge, to complete their work, and put out of their pain the poor creatures writhing from agony !

“ But to the second report, ensued a bitterer sound than even the last moans of the dogs which the gendarmes were despatching with the butt-ends of their arms ;—a shriek—*such* a piercing shriek !—*Not* from my daughter—though, at that moment, she fell wounded to

the ground,—but from the women who had seen her rush desperately forward to make a last fatal attempt at interposition between those ruffians and our poor old favourite.

“I pressed on like mad through that yelling, shouting mob, who swore they would fire the tannery, and throw the gendarmes into the flames ;—but made way for me to reach my poor Trincia, who lay senseless on the snow, with Alienor beside her, dying fast ;—yet with the little life left in her poor old frame, feebly licking, to the last moment, the hand of her loving mistress !—Their blood was mingled together on the snow !—and, for a moment, I thought my child, as well as the dog, was gone for ever ;—till, on being raised from the ground, it appeared that the shot had only grazed her leg, and that her swoon was occasioned by exhaustion of spirit.

“We contrived to get her home, (though it was no easy matter, for the men were either struggling with the soldiers, or thronging round the frightful spectacle occasioned by the carnage of a score of dogs upon the snow.)—We

managed, however, I say, to get her home before she quite recovered her senses; so as to secure her from seeing the body of poor Alienor flung upon the heap of carcasses among the rest,—to be hacked and hewed, as though none had ever cared for her in life or death; and Trincia was in her own bed again, before she found so much strength as to call upon the name of Alienor. When the doctor came, he relieved all immediate fears about the wound, but bad me keep her quiet, so as to ward off fever; and I, who knew what sort of quiet awaited her, when she came to know what had happened, and that we were not even permitted to redeem the skin of our murdered dog, trembled to think of the consequences.

“All I foresaw occurred. Fever *did* ensue; and has since irregularly intermitted. The doctors fancy her mind is disturbed by dread of the consequences of the riot; inasmuch as the vindictive tanner, in his *procès verbal* concerning the destruction of his premises, explicitly points her out as the instigator and author of the disturbance,—the consequences of which

accusation we have yet to meet. But *I* know better!—I know that she takes no more heed of the burgomaster's threats, or our neighbours' forebodings, than if they had never been uttered; and that what keeps her nights so restless, and her days so desponding, is the consciousness of her being alone in the world,—of having lost the last link that bound her to the memory of the dead. Even when she *does* sleep, I hear her murmuring, 'Alienor,—poor, faithful Alienor,—my companion—my friend!—after all our cherishing, to die like a dog!'"

Heavy sobs now impeded the utterance of the worthy Vrouw, which I could not interrupt to inquire into the conclusion of the riot, or the condition of the owners of the dogs, thus deprived of their means of maintenance. All I ventured to observe was that, without a tittle of proof of Alienor's participation in the offence, there could be no legal pretence for including her in the warrant of execution.

"But there *was* some tittle of proof,—there was even strong presumption of guilt, in the

footprints tracked to our door," replied Vrouw Van Kerckx. "And guess, I beseech you, *who* was the author of this mischief? Moeghy!—(you remember Moeghy?) Imagine our surprise when, late on the night following the execution, the cunning villain crept down from the granary in which he had taken refuge; having secreted himself during the outcry, after his escape from the gendarmes on their way back to Vraeschoot."

"Moeghy survives, then?—Moeghy is still with you?" cried I, trusting that the object of my visit would not be altogether lost; and that a portrait of the grandson might enable Landseer to immortalize the now historical Alienor.

"He survives, *I trust*,—for it is something to know that there is a living thing in whose veins old Alienor's blood is flowing! But the moment he was discovered, I forced him back into his concealment, till I had an opportunity of getting him over safe to Nieuport, for embarkation; and Moeghy is gone to England, on board the Junge Vrouw."

This was satisfactory. *This* afforded some comfort. Nevertheless, Trincia Van Kerckx's condition moved my deepest sympathy, when, having sat by her bedside, I saw into what deep despair the poor girl was sinking.

"I never felt, till now," murmured she, in answer to my exhortations, "how thoroughly I had lost him!—He was everything to *me*.—My childhood, my youth, my future,—all were bound up in his existence."

"But your mother,—your duty to your mother—"

"My mother is old: one or other of us must soon be the survivor. What matter which?—My good, kind mother will see me laid beside Van der Heyden in the grave!"

By this time, I fear, the wish of poor Trincia has been fulfilled! For I found that her medical attendant entertained little hope of rousing her from the state of exhaustion into which she was rapidly falling. When I quitted Belgium, it was doubted whether she would survive to give evidence in the trial of the Vraeschoot rioters,

and bear testimony to the unjust sentence enforced upon the faithful SMUGGLER'S DOG.*

* The catastrophe on which the foregoing tale is founded, occurred at Binche, on the Belgian frontier, in the month of January, 1843.

THE MAN OF THE DAY.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN the first of modern novelists commenced the best of modern novels with the words, " 'TIS SIXTY YEARS SINCE," the mind of the reader was carried back at once to a stirring and romantic epoch of civil war; and the kilted legions of the stormy '45, arose like shadows before his eyes. But time has shuffled on. The Author of Waverley has become unsubstantial as the visions of his creations. Even his especial public of readers is giving way to a younger generation; and in beginning the following story, with the same popular phrase, we specify a very different moment from the arduous struggles of the Pretender;—a moment of inferior historical interest, but not the less auspicious to the development of domestic

complications as essential to the task of the novelist as the clash of political intrigues, and the waste of human life arising from that troubled source.

About sixty years ago, the gallant vessel of the British Empire was "righting itself" after one of those revolutionary breezes so often recurring among us, and so rarely amounting to a storm.—As the invalid constantly subjected to the superintendence of the physician, is often the longest liver, a kingdom at frequent issue with its authorities, forestals the growth of such political abuses as create the crisis of a revolution;—and the riots of '80, and disturbances of a dozen other epochs of the last century, probably preserved us from such disastrous convulsions of popular frenzy as have imprinted an indelible stain on the history of France.

It does not follow that our moral atmosphere was the clearer for the absence of such a crisis. A kingdom in a state of warfare, whether with itself or its neighbours, is in a state of fever. But plethora is a clinical condition almost equally dangerous; and it may be observed

that the corruptions of society never attain a more baneful flagrancy, than after a prolonged peace.

The early portion of the reign of George III. was, however, an era of exemplary morality. The domestic life of the young king afforded a model to his subjects; nay, so closely were the sovereigns of the realm surrounded by their extensive family, that this limited horizon appeared to shut out from their view all other objects. The state of Europe, nay, the state of England itself, seemed to escape the notice of George III., while engrossed by the interests of the school-room and the nursery; and Wilkes and Junius roared forth unheeded those eloquent appeals which were fated to be drowned in the clatter of pap-spoons, and the whining of the accidence.

As the arid nature of certain soils suffices to dwarf and wither even the finest saplings implanted therein, the atmosphere of a court seems to possess the power of contracting and distorting even the face of Virtue; and thus, not content with the perfection of her own domestic

excellence, Queen Charlotte affected a sort of pedantry of morality, and exercised a cold and unforbearing scrutiny into the private life of the aristocracy, which, like all excesses, led to injurious results. Those who, for very venial transgressions, political or social, found themselves coldly looked on by the king and queen, and, by that coldness, exposed to the insolence of the servile courtier tribe,—asserted their independence by setting up a rival banner. The court was abandoned by many who did not choose to be subjected to this tyranny of moral inquisition; and it was by these means that a brilliant circle of malcontents was collected to welcome and encourage the Prince of Wales, the moment his boyish frailties rendered him an object of reprobation to his strait-laced parents. A memorable lesson is afforded, by the way, to the righteous over-much of this world, in the fact that the mother who, in her old age, exhibited such unconscientious sanction to the vices of the potential Prince Regent, had begun by the most bitter severity towards the follies of the boy of eighteen. As is not un-

common, the prude who had strained at a gnat, ended by swallowing a camel.

Among those who, after being received with a frowning brow at St. James's, and pointedly excluded from a fête at Frogmore, chose to fall back on her own resources as wife of a Peer of England in the enjoyment of independence and thirty thousand a-year, was the Countess of Taunton. Having nothing to desire from the Court, unless an occasional invitation to some royal ball, the moment she found this distinction pointedly withheld, Lady Taunton hastened to take what, to the eyes of the world, appeared the initiative of offence; and laughingly announced her secession from the Goody-Two-Shoes Court of one whom she thenceforward designated, in her own thoughtless and brilliant circle, as "Mrs. Margery Meanwell."

The fault for which Lord and Lady Taunton were excluded from the graces of Windsor Castle, was a political offence of a trivial nature, occurring in the course of a county election; and reported to the queen by the wife of the Lord-Lieutenant, who happened to be one of the

starchest and most exemplary of her Ladies of the Bedchamber. So idle an incident ought never to have reached her majesty's ear: or if forced by officious gossip on her notice, should not have lingered a second in her memory; and the overweening royal displeasure with which it was visited, served not only to provoke the Earl of Taunton into factious Parliamentary opposition, but to create in the *salon* of the Countess a dangerous species of tribunal, where all that was said or done, or left unsaid and undone at St. James's, was subjected to unflinching condemnation. The liberty of the subject, and the liberty of tongue of the subject, were never more fearlessly asserted, than in the coterie at Taunton House.

Seldom does a court, even the most blameless, rise superior to such criticism. The absolute Napoleon trembled more at the gossip of the Faubourg St. Germain, than before the cannon of united Europe; and the godless and lawless Regent of France was often seen to shed tears at the bitternesses uttered against him by the dowagers of Versailles. It is pro-

bable that the biting bon-mots launched from the ruby lips of Lady Taunton, occasioned more pain in the little circle at Frogmore, than the frown of her Majesty from the throne had originally inflicted on the volatile Countess.

But while the giddy trifler thus presumed to dally with the majesty of the throne, she not only lost ground in public estimation, but deserved to lose it. Unrestrained by submission to the authority of the Court, the influence of which over her mind was clearly proved by the importance she ascribed to its displeasure, she assumed an unbecoming tone of recklessness and defiance. It has been said, with truth, that people who defy public opinion, are more apt to fall below, than rise superior to its level; and the woman who satirized with such ready wit the intolerant spirit, and petty domesticity of Queen Charlotte, accordingly exhibited a spirit of toleration far too universal, and was recognised by the world as the least conjugal and maternal of wives and mothers. Not that she was faithless to her husband, or severe to her children. But, selfishly indifferent to both

her only study was to make her life pass pleasantly away; to find pretexts for spending eight months of the year in town,—either Paris or London;—and diversify the remaining four in the country, with more music, gambling, and private theatricals, than had astonished the venerable walls of Taunton Castle, from the time of their besiegement in the wars of the Two Roses.

At the rumour of these lapses of propriety, the Court screwed up its lips, and rejoiced like a prudish spinster over the indiscretions of a rival. But there was no pretext for imposing penance. Lord Taunton, an indolent, dull, unobservant man, had no will or opinion save those of his wife; who imposed them upon him by making them pass, even to himself, as his own. He was thankful to his wife for making his house so agreeable, and his life so easy; and enjoying himself fifty times more as the centre of that brilliant circle, than as one of the outermost chorus-singers of the perpetual “God save the King,” of Windsor, blessed his stars and his Countess for having convinced him that he was the friend of Wilkes and

Liberty, and indifferent to Georges and garters, or any other aristocratic perquisite at the disposal of the Lord's Anointed.

It will readily be understood, that the banner of opposition brandished by Lady Taunton, would have flaunted in vain, had not the daring arm by which it was upheld, been that of a woman, young, and pretty, and witty. Lady Taunton exhibited the head of a clever man on shoulders of alabaster ; and by a still stranger incongruity, the boldness of her character was combined with a graceful and feminine deportment. Whatever the audacity of her conduct, her manners never exceeded the boundary of the strictest propriety ; and even while uttering bon-mots that occasionally startled the ears of her auditors, she retained the modest countenance of a nun. This species of hypocrisy was the more injurious, that women, and even men, who would have receded from her circle had her demeanour been daring as her principles, were deluded into a belief that the high-bred and plausible Lady Taunton, though sailing in the north of royal favour, was as exemplary in *her*.

way and career, as the less sparkling votaries of the throne.

Meanwhile, not a circle in London to be compared with that of Taunton House ! Every witticism in vogue was to be traced back to its fountain-head. Artists, men of science, men of letters, though receiving but crabbed courtesy from royal patronage, were *there* made to feel themselves at home. In Lady Taunton's brilliant *salon* there was always something new and original going on ; some great man sitting for his picture to some great artist,—some pretty woman subjected to a piquant sketch,—some folly of the day, to the pencil of the caricaturist. Nicknames were bestowed *there*, which the luckless victim was sure to retain for life ; epigrams and by-words manufactured, which went the round of the three kingdoms. Impromptus (*faits à loisir*) accomplished their second birth at the bidding of Lady Taunton's smile ; and the wily lady found little difficulty in convincing the credulous Earl, that political hints let fall by himself in the course of their soirées, had inspired some of the finest speeches of Sheridan and Burke.

Now, albeit great lords and ladies pretend to despise literature and depreciate the arts, by designating authors and artists as "lions,"—"odd people,"—or "strange geniuses,"—they are sure to crowd, with double zest, to any house they frequent, as an unfailing resource against their own mental collapse of dulness and ennui; and the finest of the fine world, accordingly canvassed eagerly for admittance into a circle whose ease, freedom, and brilliancy, were said to rival the *laissez-aller* of Parisian life. The most fashionable young men of the day were proud to frequent the house of the celebrated Lady Taunton. The stupid began to fancy themselves clever, after such close contact with the celebrities of the day; and as a few Bristol stones will pass unsuspected amid a sufficient display of diamonds, the small wits of the aristocracy contrived to pass for brilliants, while emitting their feeble rays in company with the master-spirits of the day.

Thus placed in good humour with themselves, they grew in charity with others, and returned again and again and with an anxious

desire to please, to a circle which no cloud was ever permitted to overcast, and which was gay, motley, and sparkling as the garb of Harlequin.

By the time this society had been ten years in existence, it had substantiated itself by the creation of a class of men and women suitable to its purposes. It was what we conventionally call "a set,"—a name, by the way, seldom bestowed upon any praiseworthy or meritorious order of persons. The Taunton "set," accordingly consisted almost exclusively of pleasure-lovers, disposed to amuse themselves, no matter at the cost of whom or what; and ambitious people, desirous to distinguish themselves with the same recklessness of principle, elbowing or jesting their way through life, in utter irresponsibility to God or man.

It is a mighty pleasant thing to a harassed statesman, weary author, exhausted artist, or bored lordling, to know that, evening after evening, a well-furnished, well-lighted house is open to him, where he will hear things more pleasantly said than elsewhere;—where a succession of grotesque glasses will be unostentatiously

placed in the magic-lantern of life,—a Lancastrian school of amusement, where every one contributes, without effort, to the entertainment of his neighbours.

To expect a man, emerging from scenes so exciting, to stop short, and inquire of himself, whether, in the indulgence of such pastimes, “virtue has gone out of him,” were to tax with too great an exaction, the vigour of modern morality; and the deterioration arising from the influence of the “Taunton set,” was consequently so progressive and inostensible, that the artist graduated into a *roué*,—the man of fashion into an infidel,—and the pains-taking patriot into a political adventurer,—while supposing themselves to be (as we have described), mere loungers in a *bureau d'esprit*.

CHAPTER II.

AMONG the most popular frequenters of the circle, was a young man named Sidney Hammond, (he signed himself, "S. Sidney Hammond," and his enemies persisted in asserting, that the mute S. of his style and title, implied a "Samuel," which he thought proper to drop, as unromantic,) a young man who, in the Taunton set, was called a young man of fortune, and in every other, a very rising young man;—that is, he was generally considered a rising young man, because the Taunton set paid him the deference they considered due only to young men of fortune.

The real fortune of Sidney Hammond, (like himself, we will drop the initiatory S.,) consisted in that sunken rock of the sea of active life, ten thousand pounds; enough to inspire the

pretension to leisure, yet insufficient to maintain it. He was the son of an official man of expensive habits, who chose to keep up certain appearances in the world; and as part of them, and with no speculative views, had educated his son at Eton and Oxford. Sidney Hammond was, accordingly, an early adept in the wisdom of the schools, *i. e.* the public schools. The same system of morals which had induced the father to establish his popularity in society by keeping a French cook instead of laying by fortunes for his children, determined the son to keep a showy phaeton, an accomplished valet, and a place in an opera-box, instead of husbanding his means with the hope of ultimately husbanding a wife. Hard, and polished as all hard substances are apt to become by friction, he had been, at fifteen, too much a man of the world, to entertain much thought, at five-and-twenty, of the world to come. Sidney Hammond was consequently pronounced, in the Taunton set, to be a charming fellow,—a most gentlemanly young man;—though, had his associates been either married or monied men,

it was very questionable whether they would have trusted him, to any extent, with the custody of their purse or their wife.

One of his associates, however, was, even on these points, manifestly unscrupulous. Of Taunton House, Sidney Hammond possessed *les grandes et les petites entrées*; and it was the remark of every one newly admitted into the set, that go there at what hour you would, —morning, noon, or night,—you were sure to run your head against Hammond.

“The fact is,” Lord Taunton would observe, (in reply to one or two old and intimate friends, who assumed the privilege of ancient friendship, and tried to make mischief, by insinuating hints concerning the frequency of his visits), “I cannot do without Hammond. Hammond saves me worlds of trouble,—brings me the news of the clubs, and skims the morning papers for me. When there is anything worth reading in the periodicals, it is doubled down for me by Hammond. When those cursed foreigners bring me letters of introduction, Hammond is good enough to interpret; and,

above all, if I have a fit of the gout, I am sure of my picquet every evening, for Hammond is the most friendly and attentive fellow in the world."

Such was the view of the case imposed upon Lord Taunton by his wife, and by Lord Taunton submitted to the approval of the world.

The world, with its usual candour, laughed in its sleeve at his blindness; the blindness of the world being by far the greater of the two, in deciding that the attentions devoted by the young, handsome, and agreeable Sidney Hammond to Taunton House, were exclusively in honour of the Countess. For Lady Taunton, though no longer the reckless beauty of twenty-five who had drawn down upon herself the displeasure of royalty, was still a very attractive woman: and those who witnessed the persevering assiduities of Hammond, his attendance in private and public, his zeal in fetching her Ladyship's shawl, and calling her Ladyship's carriage, — and above all, his preference of a morning in her boudoir, or evening in her quiet circle, to the most brilliant *déjeuner* or crowded

ball-room elsewhere, could scarcely doubt that this apparent devotion was the result of one of those *liaisons* which Italy sanctions openly—France tacitly—and England hypocritically,—by uttering loud disclaimers, and pretending disbelief.

But, alas ! the London world was deceived—including, among the dupes, the Countess herself. Lady Taunton was thoroughly persuaded that nothing but profound respect for her well-known irreproachability of conduct and principles (well-known, indeed—for she was never weary of proclaiming the magnitude of her virtue) ! had restrained the feelings of her young admirer within becoming bounds ;—and one of the arts on which she prided herself, was the tact with which she had restricted him to such general terms of gallantry, as enabled her to retain him as the confidential friend of the family. As regarded her feelings, she was as incapable of any warmer emotion towards him as towards any human being ; and, in spite of the coquetry which delighted in seeing one so popular attached like a slave to her car of triumph,

she would have deeply regretted any avowal of preference necessitating his dismissal from the house.

Convinced, however, that the man who gave up his whole time to her caprices, was in the depths of his soul passionately devoted to her,—when surveying her beautiful person in the glass, often did she murmur to herself, with an air of compassionate superiority, “*Poor* Sidney—*poor* Hammond!”—

“He could scarcely give me a greater proof of his devotion,” thought the vain Countess, “than the patience with which, for my sake, he sacrifices so much of his time to accompany Lord Taunton to plays and auctions, picture-galleries and popular preachers. I can fully appreciate poor Hammond’s martyrdom, while enduring what *I* find it out of my power to support. But what will not love enable a man to go through.—*Poor* Sidney!—*Poor* Hammond!”

Yet all this time, the martyrdom endured by “poor Sydney,” as an attendant in her Ladyship’s boudoir, in copying silly verses into gorgeous albums, in listening hour after hour to

the bon-mot which she repeated in succession to half-a-hundred morning visitors,—in hearing the news of the day lisped into absurdity by the lips of namby-pamby lords and ladies of fashion,—in seeing the sacred ark of politics defiled by the touch of Lady Taunton's meretricious hand, sparkling with rings and redolent of essences,—was fifty times greater than the ennui he sometimes experienced while lounging in silence by the side of the Earl;—a quiet inoffensive man, who neither wounded the vanity of his companions, nor harassed them by the susceptibilities of his own.

For this *preux chevalier*, this supposed adorer of Lady Taunton, was essentially a man of the day,—a child of the century;—cold-blooded, selfish, designing;—and the real object of his devotion at Taunton House was the advancement of his own interests in life! It was there alone he found himself in contact with those whom he regarded as auspicious arbiters of his destiny!

"At my age, were I to exert what little interest I possess to obtain an appointment,"—

argued Sidney with himself, on the death of his father,—“what should I obtain? Some villanous clerkship, which would at once depreciate my position in society, and lead to nothing. But if I wait till I have made myself a name, and am recognised as a man of talent, they will be ashamed to offer me anything undeserving my acceptance. Once embarked in public life, *vogue la galère*!—the rest depends upon myself. But by the time I accomplish the age and reputation indispensable to my projects, the whole face of political life will have altered. The party of the Prince will then be predominant; and being fortunately uncompromised, it is as easy to attach myself to the worship of the rising sun as of any other. At Taunton House, I meet the leading members of the liberal party, who have at present leisure to take cognizance of a man professing their principles, and exhibiting abilities calculated to do them service. To the Tauntons, therefore, will I attach myself;—work my way perseveringly towards my object,—undeterred and unseduced by those attractions which shake the

consistency of other young men. By extending my connexions in the political world, I may, in time, work my way into Parliament. There are occasions when a sudden vacancy serves to put in requisition the services of any trustworthy and zealous adherent nearest at hand. No place on earth, therefore, where it will be more useful to me to make myself advantageously known, than Taunton House."

Such were the views and principles of the rising young man, who, at twelve years old, had been sent by his father to a public school to increase his connexions.

Few species of society are more agreeable than an established circle like that of Taunton House, where a specific set of remarkable persons assembles, week after week, and year after year, rather to meet each other than for the sake of their host. The *habitués* of such a house concede to each other's peculiarities, understand each other's habits and interests, and a general spirit of fusion produces an even surface peculiarly susceptible of polish.

At the close of five years, Sidney Hammond

had made to himself, at Taunton House, friendships and acquaintanceships of the most promising nature. Tolerated, in the first instance, in the set, as a gentlemanly lad hopelessly in love with the brilliant Countess, he contrived, by degrees, to recommend himself to the better opinion of those whose esteem was likely to do him service. An admirable listener, he had a ready stage-laugh at the service of those who professed to be entertaining ; and an air of profound gravity and conviction for those who pretended to the didactic. It was part of his daily business to make himself better acquainted with the debate of the night before, than even those whose eloquence had taxed therein the patience of the reporters ; and often was he enabled to set right an honourable member, or noble lord, in the particulars of his own speech. Under such circumstances, it needed only a session or two to convert him into "a smart young fellow" till, in the sequel, he was designated, among the bald-heads and grey-beards who came to drivel their political opinions or vent their snarlings against the powers that

were, beside the tea-table of the Countess of of Taunton—as “a very rising young man.”

Already the first step upon the ladder of ambition was accomplished. Sidney Hammond's rapid advance in the estimation of her set, passed unnoticed by the Countess, because he was interesting to her vanity, rather than to her affections. Had he really occupied the place imagined by the world, she would have been proud of his triumphs, and zealous for his success in life; but as “poor Sidney” constituted only a minor portion of the amusement of her day, she saw no further, than that he bored himself to talk politics to Lord Taunton's political associates, in order to blind them to the incongruity of so very young a man being a frequent intruder into their confabulations.

Constant, meanwhile, to his object, Hammond diverged neither to the right, nor to the left; nor did he ever by grasping at shadows, in attempting to extend his connexions in the great world lose hold of the realities of Taunton House. There, he met all whom it was essential to him to meet; and aware that the

Countess was not a woman to be contented with a divided homage, and that the perseverance of his devotion alone effaced, in the estimation of the heartless woman of the world, his deficiencies of birth, fortune, and fashion,—he neglected all other sources of advancement. In the Taunton set he must either “live, or have no life.”

The matters involving his future political existence were now approaching to a crisis ; for the unfortunate King’s malady had declared itself—affording, like all other public disasters, grounds for venal speculation. A regency was imminent. The Taunton House set was looking forward to the inauguration of the chief of its party, and Sidney Hammond to the crowning of his hopes, by promotion to a place on his Royal Highness’s footstool.

Yet, even the restless interest he could not but evince in the question, failed to open the vanity-blinded eyes of the Countess. It was with her usual smile of coquetish superiority that she murmured the name of “poor Sidney,” while noticing with what eagerness he embraced

a cause of no manner of moment to one of his obscure sphere, except as involving *her* interests and those of Lord Taunton.

“ In his single-mindedness, poor fellow !” thought the vain-glorious *intrigante*, “ he forgets that when Lord Taunton forms part of the Cabinet, it will be impossible for *him* to retain the same familiar footing in our society, —that I shall no longer have half so much time to bestow upon him,—and that others of higher personal consequence will supersede him in his attendance ! *Poor* Sidney !—*Poor* Hammond !—he will find out all this too late ! However, there *must* have come a time when his intimacy here would be less acceptable ; and far better that the break should arise from a cause so natural, and so little painful to his feelings, than from explanations humiliating to all.”

Bootless philosophy !—The expectations of the Countess were destined to disappointment. She was not fated to triumph, in her turn, over the royal lady who had triumphed over herself. The hopes of the party were for the present blighted ; and before the partisans of the Prince

had half recovered the shock, the will of Providence frustrated their further views, by the perfect restoration of the afflicted King.

“How keenly does he feel my disappointment!” was the secret reflection of Lady Taunton on the elongated face of her devoted friend; and scarcely a woman of her acquaintance but was of opinion, that the ambitious Countess must be almost compensated for the loss of the honours for which she had been supposed a postulant, by the untired and untirable attachment of the “distinguished young man,” who scarcely stirred from her side,—the most faithful among the faithful adherents of Taunton House.

CHAPTER III.

THOUGH thwarted and vexed, the hopes of Sidney Hammond, meanwhile, were rather deferred than extinguished; nor did he relax in his line of policy, because the goal proved further off than he had anticipated. More than ever self-reliant, he had every reason to congratulate himself on his position in society. The undisguised partiality of Lady Taunton had done him no harm, even with many whose rigid code of morality might have been expected to place the attachment of a married woman in a less favourable light. But people seemed to make excuses, he thought, for a preference so natural. People seemed to feel that she could not do otherwise than love and admire the man who accumulated so many personal and mental distinctions. All he feared was her growing weakness

in his favour. Nothing discomposed him more than the apprehension that she might be betrayed into some unbecoming exhibition of her passion before he had attained his object, and secured his promotion. The promising young man who had fixed his hopes on public distinctions, dreaded an *esclandre* as much as the severest prude !—

Though Hammond had never entertained an idea of following the law as a profession, (his fatal ten thousand pounds inspiring him with pretensions to a less thorny avenue to the temple of fame), he had kept his terms, and still resided in the Temple, in the belief that this sort of professional pretension afforded him a more positive standing in the eyes of official men ; and during the intervals of his visits to Taunton Castle, and one or two of the country houses of the intimates of its noble owner, it was his custom to retreat into this sober domicile, and repair, by a few months' assiduous study, the mental ravages produced by the enervating habits of a life of do-nothingness.

With the Countess, meanwhile, he kept up a

regular correspondence ; assiduously supplying to the Earl those anecdotes of London gossip which even the most stagnant moments of the metropolis are always able to furnish to the liveliest condition of the country ; and to her Ladyship, the pleasing excitement produced by high-flown protestations, “ full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

It was towards the close of one of these studious intervals, that Sidney Hammond, who had been spending a couple of dull months in the Temple after the expiration of the shooting season and the Christmas holidays, was growing sufficiently weary of legs of mutton, and the society of men whose conversational powers emulated the solidity and inelegance of that substantial fare, began to look forward with eager delight to the opening of the Temple of his divinity. He was indeed justifiable in his joy at the Tauntons' return to town. With such a French cook as theirs,—such a cellar,—and such a dining-room,—their claims to the sympathy of their friends were past dispute.

“ Another dull week, and they will be here !”

mused "poor Sidney," as he took his way towards St. James's Street, to see what news was to be collected in the neighbourhood of Brookes's; and as it happened to be Saturday, he had the satisfaction of acquainting Sheridan and Burke, (whom he met lounging on the pavé in Pall Mall), that he had heard from Taunton Castle, and that, on the 25th, their friends were to be in town. It was only through their common initiation into the Taunton set that he was entitled to address these men, whose very bow conveyed distinction.

Though incapable of emulating, Hammond could doubtless appreciate the lofty elevation of thought and feeling characterizing the master-spirits of a party whose more ostensible members were heartless and frivolous as himself. With the helpless wonder with which a child contemplates such a structure as St. Paul's, or a school-boy the majesty of the Iliad, he regarded the statesmanlike and thoughtful policy of those more steadfast minds to whom power was precious as a means, rather than as an end; recognising, without desiring to ennoble, the inferiority

of his own pretensions. Their broadly-based and nobly-aspiring ambition stood before him like a mighty pyramid, in whose shadow provinces lie sheltered, grounded upon eternal foundations, and tapering to the sunshine of Heaven,—compared with the unstable and glittering Chinese pagoda typifying his own interested aspirings. Still, he knew that it was only by the strength of their vigour his fragility could be protected,—and was satisfied that he could not moor his skiff of vanity too closely under their majestic ramparts.

“How much more pleasantly have I shaped my course,” mused Sidney Hammond, as he sat, skimming the morning papers the following day over his coffee and rolls, “than by harnessing myself to the drudgery of the law, like Varley and Wrangham, and others with whom I started in life; and who, from that day to this, have buried themselves in books and business, yet are now scarcely beginning to earn their own maintenance!—While I have been enjoying all that is most enjoyable in society, those fellows have renounced every pleasure or enjoyment of life;

their reveries brightened, perhaps, by remote visions of the Bench or the Woolsack, and a tablet surrounded by splay-footed allegorical virtues in Westminster Abbey. But what then? Even should these professional prosperities be eventually attained, what do they afford to compensate the waste of ten or fifteen of the best years of life,—the only years worth living,—with all the senses in their bloom, and the pulses of existence throbbing with intensity of enjoyment? Thank Heaven, my modest competence secured me from the necessity of toiling for bread; and the moment a man works for the mere cake of life, he is privileged to choose his own pleasant time and place for the labour.”

Had any better (or worse) genius whispered at that moment to Sidney Hammond that this modest competence might comprise the utmost extent of his worldly provision, and that, though a man at thirty is rich with five hundred a-year, a man of fifty is debarred by such a limitation of income from all the happier stabilities of life,—in the wantonness of his pride he would have scouted the idea that his individual merits

could be so overlooked by the discernment of destiny. Courted by his betters, *quoted* by his betters, he had some grounds for his vain conviction that he had attained sufficient notoriety to be sure of a provision on the accession of his party to power. For it did not occur to him that, unsupported by family connexion or Parliamentary influence, his claims were likely to be superseded by those of hundreds of intelligent young men attached by collateral threads to the party, each of whom exhibited more experience or aptitude for business than himself; and that the pleasant small-talker of a dinner-party, who writes piquant articles for reviews and is tolerated by public men of higher calibre simply as somewhat less silly than the lordlings of ton,—is at a prodigious distance from such a position as maintains its own ground amid the struggling and wrangling for place consequent on every change of the Administration.

Even the expected change, however, still remained prospective; and if he contented himself with the delay, it was because the in-

terim was to be spent in the golden palace of his Armida.

But while indulging over the breakfast-table in his compassionate soliloquy touching the martyrdom of his friends Varley and Wrangham, he was interrupted by the arrival of a letter emitting the well-known scent of *maré-chale*, indicating as plainly as the post-mark, that it originated in the boudoir of Taunton Castle; and with his usual cold-blooded egotism, Sidney Hammond allowed it to remain unopened on the table-cloth, till, by a patent apparatus, he had succeeded in boiling to half a turn the two new-laid eggs, whose preparation was too important to be submitted to hands less experienced than his own;—then, having leisurely buttered his sippets of crisp dry toast, and, after the discussion of the last morsel, rinsed his mouth and wiped his hands, he proceeded to open his letter as coolly as if, like the prints of butter before him, it had been carefully iced.

The utmost he anticipated from the epistle was a commission or two to execute for the

Countess previous to her arrival in town : the chair-cushions of her opera-box to be covered with new chintz ; her subscription to be renewed at Hookham's ; or a hint of expedition with her new chariot for the birth-day, to be given to her coachmaker in Long Acre. For, during her Ladyship's absence from town, "poor Sidney" was habitually employed to fetch and carry for the lady of his thoughts ; Lady Taunton feeling intimately convinced, that to bear her errands from one bargain-shop to another, was to her devoted admirer a task more acceptable than to be signing despatches in Downing Street, or calling forth the cheers of the House of Commons !

On opening the letter in question, however, Hammond perceived, from its length and complexion, that it was no scribbled catalogue of commissions, no précis of orders to Hendrie to let the Hungary Water be better than the last ; or reprimands of the tardiness of Robert and Boutaut. It was far more clearly and distinctly written than the thousand epistles which, in the course of the last half-dozen years, he had

received from Lady Taunton. There was evidence of a well-selected sheet of paper,—a new pen,—nay, even of a rough copy, in the carefully calculated epistle, which pretended, nevertheless, to flow from the heart of the writer to that of the reader ; and which, if such were really the case, indicated, at least, that for any humanity of feeling evinced by either heart, they might as well have been manufactured out of Portland stone.

“Although I am satisfied, my dear Sidney,” wrote Lady Taunton, “that your own tact and knowledge of the world must have already suggested to you all I am about to say, yet, lest your feelings should be tempted to overlook the admonitions of your graver moments, I feel it a duty to my family and myself to observe, that I fear a time is come exacting some modification of our intimacy.

“You are well aware how grateful I have ever felt towards you for your disinterested friendship for the Earl ;—a friendship which has induced you, indeed, to sacrifice many moments to the dulness of our domestic circle, which you

might have passed elsewhere in a manner far more consonant with your age. But a period has arrived, when to persist in accepting these sacrifices, would be to expose our intimacy to a peril I dare not adventure. Since you quitted the castle, Harriet (who is to be presented immediately after Easter) has been emancipated from the school-room, and, for some weeks past, has made her appearance in our circle. I need not tell you that the first object in life of Lord Taunton and myself, is to see this dear girl satisfactorily established. With her fortune, connexion, and attractions, there is every reason she should make a brilliant alliance; and since, from the secluded life my daughter has led, her heart will naturally be more open to the influence of first impressions than those of other girls of her age, I am doubly called upon to be careful that she shall receive only such as are likely to conduce to her permanent advantage in life.

“With these views, my dear Sidney, you will, I am sure, perceive that your continued intimacy in the family would be fraught with

danger for us all. Lady Harriet could scarcely fail to give her confidence and affection to one so fascinating as yourself, whom she has been accustomed to regard as the bosom friend of her parents; and for whom, I greatly fear, she might imbibe a partiality more than likely to disincline her young heart for the prudential marriage I have set my heart upon her making in the course of the season.

“Till Harriet shall be settled in life, therefore, I have to request, as a personal favour towards Lord Taunton and myself, that without taking exception at any alteration you may perceive in our deportment, you will cease to frequent our house in the familiar manner hitherto so agreeable to us all. At some future moment, I trust we shall meet on our former footing; till when, with kindest regards from the Earl, believe me, ever, my dear Sidney, sincerely yours,

“L. TAUNTON.”

A sudden plunge on a winter's night into a freezing river, could not have produced a more

disagreeable congelation in the frame of Sidney Hammond, than the perusal of this heartless epistle. Lady Taunton pretending to exhibit the solitudes of a mother!—Lady Taunton indulging in maternal anxiety! He had scarcely patience with her hypocrisy! From first to last of their intimacy, though often the inmate of the Earl and Countess at their country seats, as well as their daily visitor in town, he had not seen Lady Harriet Bertie half-a-dozen times,—so little had she been admitted to share the pleasures of society of her parents. Lady Taunton's children were in fact the creation of head-nurses and governesses. Knowing them to be watched over and cared for to the amount of nearly a thousand a-year, and with so many abject implements at her disposal, she felt exonerated from the vulgar routine of parental duties; and the Lady Harriet, of whose interests she spoke in terms so tender, was in point of fact almost a stranger to her mother!

Sidney Hammond remembered having met her occasionally sauntering in company with the

governess and the younger children, among the beautiful shrubberies of Taunton Castle. He had noticed her ingenuous countenance and exquisite complexion; the veined marble of her temples,—the delicate lineaments and diminutive head proverbially indicating nobility of origin. As she raised towards him her large grey eyes from beneath their fringe of jet black lashes, he had sometimes regretted that Greuze and Watteau had not possessed so fair a model for their delicate imaginings of shepherdesses arrayed like *marquises*, or *marquises* with the air of shepherdesses. But the idea of making himself acceptable to the pretty automaton was as unlikely to enter his head, as to affect terms of gallantry towards a well-dressed wax-doll. Of this, Lady Taunton was as well aware as himself; and she must consequently have ulterior views in dismissing him from her house on such a pretext.

Who was jealous of him? Certainly not the Earl! Who mistrusted his growing ascendancy over the mind of the brilliant Countess? Certainly not the Earl! Lord Taunton

had, from the first, sanctioned the intimacy, and evinced perfect blindness or perfect indifference. Convinced that he was sacrificed to some unknown rival, Sidney Hammond began to experience, at the moment of his dismissal by the haughty woman to whom the world believed him all in all, and for the first time in his life, some disposition to attach importance to her preference. The result, however, of all his indignation and all his repinings, was the disagreeable consciousness that he was a lost man; and, like the first lost man victimized by the frailty of the sex, banished for ever from his terrestrial paradise. No more Taunton House for him,—no more Taunton Castle;—no more smiles from the Prince, or bows from Grey, or nods from Sheridan and Fox! For he now knew enough of the ways and means of the Taunton set, to be aware that a star once fallen from their sphere, its place knew it no longer;—that a man was either one of them, or nothing.

All therefore that remained for him was to gather together the three hundred and fifty

pounds per annum still remaining of his ten thousand pounds, retrench his expenses, resume his former familiarity with such men as Varley and Wrangham, and reattach himself, if possible, to the scattered hordes of Hammonds from whom his father had indulged in the vanity of distinguishing himself, and from whom he had shrunk with loathing in his artificial capacity of a man of fashion. For he possessed uncles in the city, and cousins in Bloomsbury and Marylebone, who might, under his present embarrassing circumstances, prove available.

But was this *all* the opening that remained? The morning was a cheerless one. A small, drizzly, silent March rain came down so unremittingly, as to appear a positive atmosphere, rather than an accidental visitation; and as "poor Sidney" reclined in his roomy arm-chair before the fire, in those often contemned chambers which, now that his prospects in life were closed, had grown suddenly too sumptuous and costly for his means,—he felt sadly out of sorts with the hollowness of the world,—and inclined to believe that all was over. He, the

most heartless of mankind,—he, the very King or Crown-prince of the Surfaces, took refuge from his follies in reviling the selfishness of society and the egotism of mankind! In his irritation at finding himself a dupe, the tool of an artful woman, he was as angry as though *he* had not intended to convert *her* into the implement of his ambition;—as angry, in short, as if he had indulged in *real* feelings to be outraged!

With the genuine spirit of his class, however, his first object was to conceal from others the downfall he could not conceal from himself. Half the torture of misfortune to worldly people consists in the injury to their self-love; and the apprehension of becoming “poor Sidney” to the malicious world, inspired him with audacity that almost supplied the place of fortitude.

Instead, therefore, of allowing echo to answer “ALL!” in reply to the above inquiry concerning the sum total of his remaining prospects, he argued with himself that though superannuated for professional exertion,—though too late

for law, physic, or divinity, army or navy,—one of the most important avenues to social prosperity was still open: he might make an interested marriage!—The fact of his decadence was yet a secret. He was still Sidney Hammond the rising young man; and instead of economy and nepotism,—selling his phaeton and cultivating uncles in Bedford Square, he would look out for a rich wife! There was nothing degrading in such a proposition. Everywhere but in England, marriage is a matter “dealt with by attorneyship;” and why be more delicate in his sentiments on such a point than the collected millions of the continent? Since there *be* heiresses in the world, it is written that they must be sought in marriage; and it were doing them an injury to suppose that, in the superfluity of their affluence, they are not disposed to make a disinterested match.

At the close of these cogitations, Sidney Hammond rose from his chair, and discovered for the first time, that the looking-glass over his mantel-piece was cloudy and of inferior quality; so little was he satisfied with the

review of his forces, previous to opening his new campaign. For, alas ! the face reflected before him, was no longer the fine, open, manly countenance, with which he had first entered the gates of Taunton House. He now discerned certain puckering near the eyes, almost amounting to crows' feet ; and, as well as the imperfect light of that heinously rainy day permitted him to ascertain, could almost have sworn that one or two silvery fibres had inserted themselves (perforce of nights spent at loo and pharoah in the Taunton set) into the jetty whiskers forming an ebony frame to the fine oval of his face.

His task as a fortune-hunter would only be the more laborious ! But the hope of silencing the sneers of society and of rising superior to the consequences of Lady Taunton's ingratitude, nerved his courage to confront the labours of Hercules !—

CHAPTER IV.

BEFORE he made up his mind in what tone to reply to the insolent letter of the Countess, he passed carefully in review the eligibilities as a wife presented by the various women of fortune of his acquaintance. Society has always its rich widows and wealthy heiresses,—each usually provided with some draw-back, forming a bane almost past relief of the golden antidote of *aurum potabile* ; and both in and out of the Taunton set, Sidney Hammond collected for review a glittering phalanx, each more or less efficient for his purpose.

There was the young Baroness, Lady Chesterle-street.—But *she* was too well versed in the mysteries of society, not to regard with mistrust his sudden alienation from the feet of the

Countess of Taunton. There was Miss Madling, with twenty thousand a year ;—but *she* had too many rich men-of-business about her, connected with the mercantile origin of her fortune, not to be fonder of investing her savings in the public funds, than in the gratitude of the handsomest or most agreeable man in existence. There was the widow Penshurst, whose diamonds formed a sort of galaxy in the ground-tier at the opera ; but *she* had already been the victim of an interested marriage. There was the Dowager Countess of Claridge, — but *her* avarice was more than proportionate to her prodigious jointure.

On second thoughts, Sidney Hammond determined to moderate his views on the score of property, and extend them as regarded personal attractions. No occasion, because he wished to marry well, to sacrifice himself to a monster ! In such a case, Lady Taunton would still maintain her advantage over him. In such a case, he should as decidedly become “ poor Sidney,” and be sacrificed to the wits and caricaturists of the Taunton set, as by

remaining a peevish, disappointed bachelor in his Temple chambers !

The final result of the cogitations of that rainy day, was a visit the day following to a certain Mr. Hardington, resident in Harley Street; —a wealthy merchant, grey as Polonius but somewhat wiser, who, *like* Polonius, rejoiced in “one fair daughter whom he loved passing well.” Having no maiden sister or *gouvernante* to look after the said fair and motherless daughter, Sidney Hammond could do no more than leave a card. For Louisa Hardington received no morning visitors ; and though, on his introduction to her at a ball at the house of an eminent banker some weeks before, he had been invited by the father to improve the acquaintance, there was something so little attractive to him, at that time, in the idea of a beautiful girl with fifty or sixty thousand pounds and as much more in prospect, who had never heard of the Taunton set and was never likely to be heard of in the order of society which *he* presumed to call the world,—that he had refrained from profiting by the hint.

But now, a change was come over the spirit of his dream ; or rather, from a dream, he had progressed into realities ; and right glad was the discomfited minion of Taunton House when, a few days after his pilgrimage to Ultima Marylebone, he received an invitation to dinner from the substantial city man he had hitherto treated so cavalierly.

One of the many symptoms that Hammond was in reality what we have described him, a child of the century, was the flexibility, or rather plasticity of his character.—Reed to the very pith, he could not only bend to the storm, but accommodate himself to all possible variations of atmosphere ; and before the world was cognizant of his ignominious exit from the Taunton set, he had made a triumphal entry into another, which might be described as its very antipodes.

At the house of John Hardingston, Esq., M.P., of Harley Street and Great St. Helen's, the discarded adventurer was welcomed as a man of fashion and fortune, deigning to stoop from his sphere, in favour of a house presided over by one of the handsomest girls in London ; and on

the day of his first dinner with his intended father-in-law, the rest of the party, consisting of two country baronets with their females, and two or three wealthy bankers with theirs, exchanged significant glances with Louisa, on noticing the attention paid her by a personage whose name invaded, with such far from damnable iteration, the paragraphs of the *Morning Post*, as dining with earls, and frequenting the balls of duchesses.—For this hum-drum circle, the highly-polished manners of Sidney Hammond, and the conversational tact acquired by talking only *with* and *for* the best society, possessed peculiar charm. Sidney Hammond was precisely a *héros de roman* for the horizon of Harley Street. A gay captain of the guards, they would have repudiated as frivolous,—a reckless lordling, as a *roué*;—but Sidney, who entered into political discussions with as capable an air as the gravest owl of them all,—Sidney, who could quote Fox, Sheridan, and Burke, inedited and pure from the fountain-head, commanded general attention.

From none more than from poor Louisa.—

Miss Hardington was a girl of elegant mind and timid disposition, who, having lost her mother at an early age, was educated at one of those first-rate "establishments" where half-a-dozen damsels of family and fortune are received at the separate cost which would maintain the whole half dozen elsewhere ; and having, in this nursery of exclusivism, contracted intimacies inspiring a taste for aristocratic distinctions, it necessarily followed, that when required, at eighteen, to assume the head of her father's establishment, she was disagreeably startled to find herself placed below the level of her former associates.—It was no fault of her's that the tone of her father's city friends was less refined than she had been prepared to expect. Louisa had been required, for the last twelve years, to cultivate tastes and pretensions beyond her sphere ; and during the first few months of her sojourn at home,—a home which her father's peremptory occupations in the city, eight hours of the day, rendered solitary enough for the promotion of serious reflection,—could not forbear regretting that she had been encouraged to

indulge in social ambitions never likely to be realized.

Mr. Hardington's intimates, on the other hand, were people too much engrossed by the active business of life to take much heed of his daughter. On finding her so grave, they concluded her to be shy; and on hearing the complaints of their wives and daughters that she was a fine lady, replied that she was young enough to mend, and would know better a few years hence.

So ingratiating a person as Sidney Hammond, was consequently a most agreeable accession to her society; and Louisa was delighted to converse with one familiar with most of her early friends, and habituated to their habits;—like herself, preferring Italian music to English glees; versed like herself in foreign literature, and devoted to the *dulce* rather than the *utile* of life. The new pretendant to her favour was too well accustomed to address himself to the foibles of those over whom he desired to obtain an ascendancy, not to make the most of the advantages he thus possessed. Nor was it alone to the

weaknesses of Louisa's character that he laid siege. On perceiving Miss Hardington's distaste for the joviality of the noisy city beaux who resorted to her father's house, in deference to this sensitive gentleness, Hammond affected in his new sphere an almost poetical refinement of delicacy and reserve. Instead of pressing his attentions upon the heiress, he pointedly marked his respectful deference by confining his assiduities to her father; and chose that she should form her estimate of his conversation as addressed to others, rather than to herself.

This species of manœuvre seldom fails of success with a young and timid girl. In this conviction that the fashionable Sidney Hammond did not consider her worthy his attention, Louisa became only the more ambitious of obtaining it. For the first time in her life, she *tried* to please; and great, indeed, was her joy and triumph on his devoting half an hour to her, to whom he had already determined to devote his future life.

To obtain admission into the society frequented by the Hardingtons was no difficult

matter to one so well established in the world as Lady Taunton's *preux chevalier* ; and it conferred additional distinction on Louisa's debut, that wherever she went, to whatever hum-drum balls or homely parties, she was followed by one whose personal qualifications were estimated by all around her as of so high an order.

But that the ambitious mind and shallow heart of Hammond were thoroughly pre-engrossed, he could not but have been touched by the graceful loveliness of the girl he was pre-determined to victimize, and impressed by the solid merit of the circle to which he was thus accidentally introduced. Among the Parliamentary men belonging to Hardington's society, there prevailed a tendency to practicalism, the origin of the sect of the Utilitarians that has since sprung up, very different from the brilliant, but frothy speculativeness of his former friends. The monied world into which he had fallen, as the antipodes of the fashionable world from which he was ejected, exhibited a less polished surface, but boasted a more solid substantiality. Both were given up to materialism ; but the

enjoyments of Taunton House seemed to depend on capricious sunshine from without ; of Harley Street, upon inherent comfort. Among the Hardington tribe he had to abjure French cookery and pharaoh,—for which capital wines and excellent whist were a satisfactory substitute ; and if his evenings were now less enlivened by brilliant sallies, there was no pretension to wit, and consequently less risk of failure.

But unfortunately, though agreeably surprised in the tone of the society on which he had ingrafted himself, Sidney Hammond had drunk too deep of the cup of Circe, to retain any pretension to pure and natural tastes. Amid these matter-of-fact people, he languished for the brilliant artificiality of Taunton House ; and while all other eyes were captivated by the youthful loveliness of Louisa Hardington, longed to re-fashion her appearance, and reform her timid simplicity, so as to render her “ presentable ” to those among whom he felt that, with such a wife, *he* might become acceptable as ever.

“ As a married man,” thought he, (after an evening spent with the graceful girl, in whose

eyes he fancied he had detected an expression of repressed but decided preference)—“as a man established in life by a prosperous marriage, Lord Taunton will be as well pleased as ever to take refuge in my company from the neglect of his wife and family. Even that woman,—even Lady Taunton,—when she finds I am not disposed to resent her treachery, and that she has no further pretext for impertinence in the danger of my society to her daughter, will be enchanted to welcome back the patient victim of her whims and caprices;—the only man, as she has often assured me, who thoroughly understands her; and who, I flatter myself, is not without his share in establishing the reputation of her lively coterie!”

Such were the honourable intentions of the accomplished gentleman, to dwell upon whose broken avowals of admiration, and expressive glances of tenderness, poor Louisa Hardington devoted so many hours of her sleepless nights:—thanking Heaven for the good fortune which, amid the prosaic tenor of her life, had brought her acquainted with a man of such ingratiating

manners, such honourable sentiments, and pursuits and habits so refined and so congenial with her own !

For how is inexperienced eighteen to be on its guard against the cruel speciousness of a Man of the Day ?—

CHAPTER V.

SIXTY years since, what is termed the season began and ended two months earlier than in our own time ; but one of the distinctions between the King's party and the Prince's, consisted in the fact that the adherents of the latter remained till the Prince's birth-day, the 12th of August ; while the votaries of Windsor Castle disappeared from London on the King's birth-day, the 4th of June.

Lady Taunton, accordingly, was among the latest to rejoin the *beau-monde* ; nor was it till the end of April that the fashionable journals began to teem with paragraphs in honour of the new beauty, Lady Harriet Bertie, who, even in a coterie far from propitious to girlish triumphs, commanded universal homage. Lady Harriet was said to be the prettiest, sprightliest, and

most taking little fairy that had ever entered the lists of coquetry ; and her bon-mots were cited, and conquests enumerated, almost as soon as she had danced her first minuet at Devonshire House. A few rhapsodical words uttered by the Prince, in her honour, served to place her at the height of the fashion.

So charming an accession to the circle at Taunton House naturally rendered imperceptible the absence of a man like Sidney Hammond ; and deeply would he have been mortified, could he have surmised how *very* few were at the trouble of inquiring what was become of him. Of the few who *did* remark his absence, the greater number guessed the exact truth ;—that he had been tacitly dismissed, as a sacrifice to propriety on the part of Lady Taunton on the *début* of her daughter,—to whose advantageous settlement such an appendage to the family was scarcely likely to conduce. A few persons who had not tact to conjecture this and keep the conjecture to themselves, on inquiring “what had become of that agreeable Mr. Hammond they used to meet at Taunton

House?"—were informed by the Countess, that "poor Sidney" being "hard up" and forced to marry for money, was paying his addresses to some city heiress.

Such was the result of his efforts to defy the superciliousness of Lady Taunton. For there is no possibility of retaliation on the part of the little who throw themselves out of their sphere, so as to incur the contumely of the great. Their utmost attempts to repique those by whose insolence they have been piqued, only expose them to further impertinence; and Sidney Hammond, among all his mistakes, was never *more* mistaken, than in supposing that his devotions to another would awaken the sensibility of the hard-hearted high-priestess of fashion.

Meanwhile, his influence in Harley Street was increased and increasing. When he made his appearance, he was welcomed with a silent blush more eloquent than words; and, at the close of a few weeks' intimacy, almost to his surprise, was invited by old Hardington, "to look in sometimes of a morning, and practise

duets with Louisa,"—a distinction which, he was well aware, was conceded to no other young man. It is true that when he profited by this unexpected permission, Louisa had been careful to surround herself with two or three of her young female friends, on pretence of getting up some choruses from Paesiello's new opera. But she might have spared herself these precautions against a *tête-à-tête*. Her own feminine reserve was a perfect panoply against all freedom of address; "just as (according to the remark of an old English writer) the Muses, in a state of nudity, have a decent and imposing deportment, while Venus, though charged with draperies, retains the air of the goddess of voluptuousness." Even when exposed by her father to the impassioned declarations of her admirer, Miss Hardington, by the influence of her manners, contrived to delay the declaration of his attachment.

But why should Louisa Hardington, to whom Sidney Hammond's attentions were so acceptable, *desire* to delay the declaration of his attachment? Was the girl, so simple-hearted

and so chaste of thought, becoming susceptible of the coquetries acquired by Lady Harriet Bertie in the meretricious atmosphere of Taunton House?

Alas! poor Louisa had far deeper, and more painful motives for her conduct! Already, the heart of that gentle girl had been tortured by a first lesson in the science of worldliness. Though seemingly surrounded by the prosperities and cheered by the dearest affections of life, there could not exist a more unhappy creature! The fanciful vexations arising from disappointment in the nature of her father's society as compared with her more sanguine anticipations, were wholly merged in grief of a more serious nature.

It was about a month after the introduction of Sidney Hammond to her father's house, that one night, on returning from a ball, during the greater portion of which her admirer had remained stationary by her side, Mr. Hardington abruptly acquainted her with the permission he had volunteered to his young friend to become a morning visitor at the house.

"I am sorry to hear it, dear papa," was Louisa's mild reply; presuming, for the first time, to differ in opinion from her father.

"And why sorry?" retorted Mr. Hardington, "I trusted, Louisa, that you had too much sense to affect the hypocritical prudery of your sex. You certainly appeared quite as well pleased to-night to retain him all the evening by your side, as *he* did to remain there."

"I *was* pleased. In the midst of a party of two hundred people, he could not be more *with* me, or nearer to me than I desired. But considering that I have no *chaperon*,—considering the remarks that might, perhaps, be made on Mr. Hammond's visits here during your absence—"

"What the devil signify the remarks of the world, since you are to be man and wife?" cried Mr. Hardington.

"But is it so sure that we *are* to be man and wife?" rejoined his daughter. "Mr. Hammond has never hazarded even a hint of proposals."

"Simply for want of an opportunity. How

is he to hazard such a hint, unless you meet elsewhere than in parties of two hundred people? It is for this express purpose I have invited him here."

"My dear father," remonstrated Louisa, inexpressibly surprised.

"It is for this express purpose, I say, I have invited him here!"—reiterated Mr. Hardington, angrily. — "It is probably my presence that embarrasses him. When he sees you here in the morning, alone and at his ease, his feelings will influence him to make the proposals I see hovering on his lips."

"I would much rather hear them without any previous effort on our part to bring him to an explanation," replied Louisa, with dignity. "I certainly hope, nay *believe*, that Mr. Hammond likes me. But there may be a thousand reasons, a thousand obstacles, which deter him from offering me his hand."

"I hope not, Louisa."

"I have sometimes fancied him even pointedly careful to avoid committing himself by anything amounting to a declaration of attachment," added Miss Hardington.

"Then you must be active in making him overcome his hesitation?" cried her father with impetuosity.

"I fear I cannot promise *that*, papa. Should he propose to me, I freely acknowledge that I should cheerfully accept Mr. Hammond for a husband. But I will never take the smallest step, or breathe the slightest word, with the view of hastening his advances."

"But I tell you you *must*!" was the vehement rejoinder of Mr. Hardington. "You must and shall." Louisa was silent. She was not accustomed to be addressed by her father in so peremptory a tone; and, for a moment, almost fancied him excited by wine.

"I repeat to you, Louisa," persisted he, "that unless you can surprise this man into offering you his hand, you are lost!"

"Surprise him?—Lost?"—faintly repeated poor Louisa, in increasing terror.

"It is time we came to a serious explanation," said Mr. Hardington, after opening the drawing-room door, to ascertain that no officious waiting-woman was loitering without.—

“ It is time we understood each other. You fancy yourself a great personage, Louisa—you fancy yourself rich and independent; and affect delicacies of sentiment and refinements of taste, well-suited perhaps to the possession of wealth and independence,—but in *your* case, wholly out of place. I am a ruined man, Louisa Hardingston. For this year past, it has been a difficult, almost an *impossible* effort to me to keep up the decent appearances of life. It is for your sake, chiefly, I have made the endeavour. To find myself reduced to beggary at the very moment of my daughter’s introduction into life, was a trial beyond my courage. Let me only see you settled in life, in the sphere to which I so long considered you entitled, and, for *my* share, I am content to fall.”

“ My dear, dear father !” exclaimed Louisa, on whom the intelligence thus abruptly conveyed produced so startling an effect, that for some moments she was incapable of utterance,—“ if indeed this terrible announcement be not an ordeal you have devised to try my strength of mind—if indeed you are a ruined man—for the sake of heaven—for *all*

our sakes—let us resign ourselves to the worst, and meet our destiny with fortitude. The efforts to which you allude, can only serve to aggravate the evil. If we must be poor, let us be poor with courage. Above all, let us not incur the disgrace, the *crime* of endeavouring to inveigle others into sharing our reverses.”

“It was just this sort of girlish romance I expected from you, Louisa! The apprehension of such Quixotism has hitherto determined me to conceal from you the state of my affairs. Thank heaven I know somewhat too much of the world to listen to your absurd arguments. Be assured that though the daughter of Mr. Hardington, the rich merchant, is surrounded by admirers, the daughter of Hardington the beggar would be left friendless and unnoticed. As to any hope of your *marriage* under such circumstances—”

“If Mr. Hammond really entertain for me the affection you suppose,” interrupted his daughter, with spirit, “our change of fortune would have little influence over his feelings. If

not, heaven forbid I should owe his attentions to deception. I entreat, dear papa, whatever course you may hold towards others and the world, do not, *do not* mislead the man whom you wish to call your son!"

A harsh laugh accompanied the ironical reply of Mr. Hardington, to whom the critical situation of his affairs had been too long familiar to produce on his mind the exciting effect which the exposure exercised over that of his daughter.

"You must have a better opinion of Hammond than I have of *him*, or any other human being," said he, "if you suppose him capable of fidelity to the daughter of a bankrupt. Do not shake your head, my dear Louisa,—I have tried the strength of worldly friendships! On the first derangement of my affairs, produced by the mercantile crisis which disorganised the whole commercial world two years ago, I had recourse to what are termed '*my friends*;' many of whom had been made so by benefits conferred, all of whom had invariably pretended the greatest zeal for my service. Yet not *one*

of them came forward! They had advice to offer, but no assistance. Fortunately, my prospects brightened; and I took care to announce them as far brighter than they really were, in order to prolong, to the last possible moment, my chances of redemption. Even when I discovered that all was lost, and could calculate to a year—a month—a week—the moment when the wreck of my fortunes must be apparent to the whole world, I kept a firm face,—determined that, in the interval, no renewal of weakness should betray my position till I had secured a happy marriage for my only daughter.”

“Your first thought, then, in your misfortunes, was to separate me from you for ever?” exclaimed Louisa. “Dearest father! it is now only that, for the first time, I begin to entertain hopes of being of use and comfort to you. So far from desiring to accelerate an explanation with Sidney,—so far from desiring to become his wife,—all I wish is to remain with you,—to sustain you in your reverses, and solace your declining years!”

“Romance, romance! mere folly and absurdity!” cried Mr. Hardington, impatiently. “This sort of thing sounds plausibly on the stage, and reads well in a novel; but, in point of plain matter-of-fact, can you not see, Louisa, that—as a ruined man, without an establishment,—without a home—a daughter would be a painful incumbrance, increasing my discomfort? No, no! child! you must marry! I had, I own, begun to entertain misgivings concerning the possibility of such a blessing. For the rash appeal to my friends has never been forgotten; and the more cautious of them survey with mistrustful eyes the evidences of my renewed prosperity. When, therefore, Hammond made his admiration manifest, I did my utmost to encourage his addresses. He has lived too completely out of our mercantile circles to have the slightest suspicion; and, having once made his declaration in form, it will be too late for him to retract, on learning that you have only the five thousand pounds secured to you by your mother’s settlement. Nay, with *his* fortune and prospects, perhaps I

wrong him by the mere supposition of any such reluctance."

"But, since I *have* five thousand pounds secured to me, papa," observed Louisa, (whom this portion of his communication rendered indifferent to the rest), "surely it will afford us both the means of subsistence? Even in the event of the realization of your worst expectations, might we not live together in some obscure retreat,—more happily, more honestly, than we are doing now,—imposing on our creditors and the world?"

These rash words produced only an explosion of wrath on the part of Mr. Hardington.

"I ask you for no advice,—no lessons,—no support,—no assistance!" cried he. "All I require of you, and I *do* require it,—is the implicit obedience becoming a daughter. My plans are decided,—my principles are fixed: Frustrate them by unbecoming interference, and from the depths of my ruin, Louisa, shall I curse you as having brought disgrace upon my house!—At present, all hope is not utterly lost. I may retrieve myself. If I get over the next

three months, I have payments due to me from India, that may carry me on safely,—nay triumphantly.—But were I, at this moment, to alienate the confidence of my commercial brethren by the slightest indication of change in my establishment, or wavering in my purposes, I would not give a month's purchase for the stability of my house!—How would it suit you, pray, Louisa Hardington, to hear your father taxed with insolvency!—How would it suit you to see his name in the *Gazette*?"

Choking sobs impeded the articulation of the broken-hearted girl, when she vainly attempted to utter the reply insisted on by her father.

"Remember, then," resumed he, 'perceiving her inability to remonstrate, "that the slightest imprudence on *your* part, may accelerate this cruel catastrophe. If *you*, my inmate, my daily companion, have remained till this day unconscious and unsuspecting of the hollowness of the superficial prosperity around you—admit that indifferent people are scarcely likely to be more discerning.—I am still rich, Louisa, for I

am rich in the confidence of the rich.—So far from supposing me on the verge of bankruptcy, the people with whom we associate regard you almost as an heiress; and unless you act up to your part—”

“I cannot, father!—for all that you may promise or threaten, *I cannot!*”—cried Louisa Hardington, recovering, in her disgust at the vile duty imposed upon her, her powers of thought and action.—“I feel that I have not courage to meet so hateful a responsibility!”

“Find it, then, to bear the malediction of the father who has sacrificed so much for your sake!” cried Hardington, quitting the room, and slamming the door with violence in her face. And the poor gentle girl was left alone with her despair.

For despair it was!—She felt that she had lost her father. It was impossible for her to regard with the same affectionate deference as before, the parent who boasted of a system of deception, and would willingly have imposed the same duplicity upon herself. Louisa had lost the father whom, a few hours before she loved

with filial reverence; and was threatened with the loss of the only human being for whom she believed herself capable of a still stronger attachment!—All was over for her!—She must either obey her father, and, to avert the fiat of his ruin, submit to a line of habitual dissembling, and forfeit for ever her self-esteem; or, by steadfastness in her principles, condemn to instant penury the man who, as he justly said, whatever might be his misfortunes, had never suffered the winds of heaven to visit her cheek too roughly; and, as Hardington assured her, disunite herself for ever from him who had become only *too* essential to her happiness!

Still, in this first combat of virtue in an uncorrupted mind, the good prevailed. At the close of the mental conflict, Louisa resolved to limit her personal expenses to the requirements of their fallen fortunes; and while retaining in public the habits exacted by the interests of the wary speculator, assume towards Sidney Hammond so cold a deportment, as must necessarily deter him from a proposal, till after the period

fixed by her father as the criterion of their destinies.

“Should our prospects improve,” argued Louisa with herself, “there will need but little kindness and encouragement to bring him back to his present feelings. Should our ruin be completed, the sequel will show whether his attachment be real, or my father’s cruel surmises justly founded.”

But Louisa had yet another ordeal to undergo. The excitement produced by these terrible explanations, seriously affected the health of Mr. Hardington. Indications of a paralytic attack became apparent that very night. Bleeding was ordered,—quiet prescribed;—and it was in one of his intervals of troubled sleep, that he extorted from his sorrowing daughter, who was watching by his bedside, a promise of implicit submission to his exactions.

On his restoration, therefore, Louisa found herself, with reluctant feelings, resuming her prodigal habits of life. New invitations were issued for future dinner-parties,—costly dresses ordered for her by her father,—and, amid the

show of opulence, which she now loathed as concealing the elements of ruin and disgrace, Sidney Hammond was more warmly welcomed than ever to the house of feasting.

CHAPTER VI.

MEANWHILE, the abruptness by which the coquetish *intrigante* of Taunton House had suddenly turned upon him, had so far shaken the confidence of "poor Sidney" in his own attractions and the consistency of the sex, that he watched every turn and variation in the countenance of the new object of his speculations, with considerable uneasiness. A clouded brow, a careless word, a listless ear, seriously affected him; and on perceiving the change produced in the manner of Louisa Hardington by her father's illness, the shrewd politician decided that, aware of his precarious condition, and on the eve of coming into the enjoyment of his fine fortune, the heiress was becoming ambitious of a higher match.

"She thinks—and she is doubtless right—

that she might do better for herself!" said he. "She is becoming more cautious,—more reserved. But that the old gentleman, alarmed by his attack, is evidently anxious to see his daughter settled in life previous to his death, I should be apprehensive that this girl, timid and artless as she seems, was temporizing with me. Luckily, her father is a plain-sailing practical man; and, aware of the miserable lot usually attending heiresses, (whose fortune is pretty sure to be squandered by some heartless *roué*,) is satisfied to see her become the wife of a poor gentleman, steady enough and sensible enough to be a safe guardian of her property. With *his* fortune, Hardington is wise enough to care little for opulence in his son-in-law. Propose when I may, I am pretty sure of the father's consent."

It was the *daughter* who puzzled him. It was the daughter by whom he found his manœuvres disconcerted. Though, at times, he had felt sure of Louisa's preference, (enlightened by those tremours of voice, and variations of complexion, which even the most prudent of

womankind is incompetent to control), still, her reserve,—her more than womanly dignity,—her open differences from him in opinion,—her pointed acceptance of the attentions of others,—convinced him that she was either the coldest or most capricious of her sex. Thwarted and vexed, his partiality, as in the instance of Lady Taunton, increased in proportion to the waywardness of its object; and never had Sidney Hammond run greater risk of finding his pretended passion converted into a real one, than when he saw Miss Hardington surrounded by admirers, of each of whom the homage seemed more acceptable than his own.

After evenings spent in such demonstrations, and the struggle of feeling arising from her dissimulation, how sore was the heart of poor Louisa! How painfully did she watch the influence of her conduct on the heart of the man she loved!—How touching, through her rising tears, were the furtive glances she fixed upon the countenance of one far too well-schooled in the doctrines of Surfaceism, to

betray any evidence of his feelings in his well-bred callous face !

It was a desperate game they were playing ;—each intent upon discovering the real sentiments of the other, which both were intent on concealing ;—the one, from the purest, the other from the vilest motives.—At those balls and parties, from which indifferent persons went away observing, —“How pretty the heiress looked to-night,—and how beautifully she was dressed !—The flirtation between her and Sidney Hammond seems to be cooling !”—or, “Hammond has hooked Miss Hardington !—more attentive to her to-night than ever !—They sat together an hour in the boudoir, looking over the *Annals* !”—poor Louisa experienced all the fluctuations of feeling endured by a rash gambler, the whole of whose earthly fortune is staked on the table before him. For *her* conduct was influenced by the presence of her father, whose eyes, from some corner or other, were, she knew, fixed upon her proceedings ; while that of Hammond, which she supposed to depend upon her smiles as surely as the

ebbing or flowing of the tide on the shining of the moon, was controlled by the parliamentary divisions of the night before, as rendering more or less urgent his re-introduction into political life, by his restoration, as a married man, to the favour and patronage of Taunton House !—

The truest and most susceptible lover never exhibited stronger ebullitions of feeling, than were often displayed by Hammond on returning at night to his chambers ; and bitter was his constant outcry against the cruel coquetry of the sex. Harassed beyond his patience,—for above all things he dreaded the ignominy of refusal,—he was literally growing pale and thin under the influence of his perplexities ;—and this piteous alteration in his appearance was not lost upon Louisa. Already she trembled, when about to attempt against him those manœuvres so nobly intended to moderate his attachment or at least procrastinate his avowals. Her reluctance was as that of a mother when inflicting punishment on an idolized child ; and tears were ever in her eyes, and anguish in her heart, whenever, in

pursuance of her generous projects, she endured with apparent satisfaction the assiduities of another.

At length, the impatience of her father grew almost as great as that of Sidney Hammond.

“This will never do, Louisa!” cried he, as they were driving home one night from the opera. “Do you suppose this sort of shilly-shally is to last for ever?—Do you imagine that I can afford to pay ten guineas for our opera-box, for you to play the fool in? Will *nothing* subdue the heartless vanity of your sex? Your encouragement of that jackanapes, Mr. Henry Lissadel to-night, drove poor Hammond almost distracted. As I followed you both through the crush-room, after you had given your arm to Lissadel, I saw that poor Sidney was pale as death. It would not surprise me if he did not keep his appointment to-morrow to meet us at the Zoological! What do you mean by this? What do you expect from it? What can be the result of a flirtation with a spend-thrift like Lissadel, who is looking out only for fortune in a wife? Must I repeat all I said to

you a month ago, concerning the disastrous position of my affairs,—concerning the necessity, the absolute *necessity*, for your marriage with Hammond ?”—

“No, no—for heaven’s sake, no !” exclaimed Louisa, dreading above all things a recapitulation of sentiments which had already so cruelly shaken her confidence in the integrity of her father. “I am to blame. I have suffered myself to be misled by the vain impulse of the moment. I will amend my fault !—Spare me to-night, dear papa, and I will—I will—” A burst of tears prevented the conclusion of her promises !

“You are well aware,” said Mr. Hardington, unmoved by distress, which he attributed to just repentance, “that it is in your power to make this man propose to you when and where you will. A word, a smile, of encouragement from *you*, and the offer of his hand is instantaneous. I give you, therefore, only a few days, Louisa ! —At the expiration of that time, unless I find your destiny decided, I swear I will throw up the game. I will oppose no further obstacle to

the progress of my misfortunes. The world shall know the worst—and its knowledge will make the worst *irretrievable*! You may then, child, rejoice in my ruin, for it will be your work. You may say to yourself for the remainder of your days—‘To gratify my frivolous coquetry, I sacrificed the life of my father!’—Ay!—the life; for so surely as I sit beside you, Louisa, I will not survive my disgrace!”

The following day, when Sidney Hammond assisted Miss Hardington to step out of her father’s handsome carriage at the gate of the Zoological Gardens, he had the gratification of finding that, instead of accepting the arm of Sir Henry Lissadel, (which was officiously interposed to make the round of the gardens), she turned blushing towards himself, and almost sought the offer of his own.

Can it be doubted that Louisa’s was fervently pressed to his heart, at so decided a mark of preference? Half an hour afterwards, the grating before the den of the giraffes, which has lent itself to the furtherance of so many flirtations, was fated to hear one of the most im-

passioned declarations of attachment that ever expanded from the lips of man, or drew tears from the eyes of a feeling and grateful woman ! Alas ! for the frankness of human nature !

Even uneasy as she was concerning the false show of prosperity surrounding her, and the precarious state of her father's fortunes, poor Louisa was a happy girl that night. How was she to doubt the sincerity of protestations so warmly and urgently expressed ? How was she to imagine that a man in the station of a gentleman—a man of refined education and unblemished honour—had made her the stake of a coldly-calculated game ? While listening to Sidney Hammond's declarations of boundless love and changeless fidelity, she was happy with all the happiness of a true and loving heart.

Instead, however, of being touched by her confiding tenderness, he almost regretted to find her so easy a dupe ; contemplating, with no little anxiety, the injury that might arise to his interests from such ready credulity ; for though it suited admirably with his plans that Miss

Hardingston should be easily imposed on, it was essential that Mrs. Sidney Hammond should be clearer-sighted. Time enough hereafter, however, to sow the seeds of Surfaceism in her heart. Time enough to imbue the timid, but frank Louisa, with the shrewdness and duplicity essential in the wife of so accomplished a man of the world.

Having ascertained at what hour the following day Mr. Hardingston would be at liberty to receive him, he hastened to comply with her request, that he would look for the carriage, (her emotions being of so genuine a nature as to make her wish to be at home); and, after assisting her in cloaking, profited by the occasion of placing her in the carriage, to press her hand and arm with all the semblance of the fondest passion. Then having bid a hearty good night to his intended father-in-law, he hurried from the house, little daunted by the prospect of the morrow's explanations. Mr. Hardingston, he was persuaded, was too attached a father to this only daughter, to resent having over-estimated the fortune of the man to whom

her whole heart was given; and, as he intended to propose settling his eight thousand pounds upon Louisa, as well as the full amount of the fortune assigned her by her father—be it what it might,—nothing could be easier than to deceive Mr. Hardington as to the amount of his income,—which, as arising from professional sources, it would be impossible exactly to specify. After all, a few thousands more or less mattered little to this wealthy merchant, whose chief object in life must be to secure the happiness of his fireside.

Thus confident in his own plausibility, Sidney Hammond gave himself up to the enjoyment of the fruition of his schemes. No one could have surveyed him at that moment, without noticing the exultation that sparkled in his eyes, and glowed in his usually colourless cheeks. His step was light, but firm—his voice melodious with inward joy. In the excitement of his success, “poor Sidney” was more than himself!—

Had a single genuine impulse of affection prompted the outpourings which had so capti-

vated the ear of poor Louisa, like herself he would have been eager for solitude and self-communion : like her, he would have wished to be alone, in order to think over every look, word, and gesture of the object of his passion. The flutter of his soul, in the first excitement of knowing himself to be beloved, must have rendered other society insupportable. So far, however, was this from the case, that instead of proceeding to his chambers from the house where he parted from Louisa, he hastened to a brilliant ball at Altamont House, the noble owner of which (a man too distinguished to have become aware, through the vulgar gossip of society, that the Sidney Hammond presented to him as a rising young man the preceding year, was now a nobody) still honoured him with invitations. On the present occasion, however, he profited by his *entrée*, neither because the Duke of Altamont *was* so distinguished a man, nor his fetes so brilliant, but because, in the consciousness of forthcoming triumph, he wanted to look upon Lady Taunton face to face. He longed to luxuriate in the feeling, while

returning with a formal salutation her patronizing bow, that his hour of independence was at hand; that he should soon meet her on ground whereon he might dictate terms of pacification.

Never had the difference between the humdrum society of Marylebone, and that aristocratic world to which he so burned to attach himself, struck him with such force, as on the present occasion! Never had the blaze, the splendour, the grace, the ease of that high caste which moves through life, as Cleopatra on the Cydnus, to the sound of flutes and hautboys, in an atmosphere of perfumes, with sails of purple and gold,—appeared, one-half so intoxicating. The lightness of its conversation,—its gay and joyous superficiality,—enchanted his very heart and soul, as being, both physically and morally, the Triumph of Surfaceism. For the jog-trot class of people to whom he had been recently paying his court, he had neither taste nor patience; unless as the leaden weight of the pulley by which he was to be elevated into importance.

The moment he entered the brilliantly-illuminated vestibule of Altamont House, blazing with light, and glowing with forced flowers of the richest fragrance, while joyous music pealed from a distant ball-room, (how different from the scanty orchestras of the Marylebone fetes) ! he felt himself an altered being. His spirits revived, and his wicked wit of aforetime came back upon him, as with the possession of a devil.

On entering the ball-room, the first object that met his eye was the lovely daughter of the Countess of Taunton,—flying through a *valse* with the heir apparent of one of the wealthiest Dukes in the kingdom,—dressed, and dancing to perfection, and embellished by the delicate bloom that exertion assigns to complexions of peculiar fairness. Impossible to look prettier, more graceful, or more attractive than Lady Harriet at that moment. The little affectations assumed by the spoiled beauty to secure her conquest, appeared as natural to her *mignon* features and fanciful dress, as the affectations of one of Watteau's pictures ; and Sidney

Hammond stood and gazed upon her entranced, with precisely the sort of admiration he would have bestowed on some bright and costly trinket in the show of a jeweller.

The somewhat too marked attitude of attention in which he stood arrested in the doorway of the ball-room, did not escape the notice of the watchful Countess. A few minutes after the close of the *valse*, the charming *danseuse* was led to a quadrille by another of the great matches of the day; to whom she dedicated precisely the same smiles, glances, and bon-mots she had just lavished on the young Marquis; and still, Sidney Hammond remained riveted to the spot,—comparing her, in his mind's eye, with the milder, and more feminine, but cold, dull, and heavy beauties of the Hardington coterie;—and secretly trembling at the prospect of introducing his Louisa into contrast with the easy audacity of the Taunton set: *not* lest *she* should derive contamination from the contact, but lest *they* should disparage his choice, as unfashionable and obscure!—

While gazing, apparently enraptured, upon

the Dresden-shepherdess-looking figure before him, Lady Taunton, who was watching him, fancied she could detect answering glances of admiration exchanged between her daughter and the nameless exile from her good graces; and her suspicions thus awakened, (needlessly enough—for the young beauty was thoroughly engrossed by the platitudes of her noble partner), she began to imagine that she was perhaps the dupe of these two persons whose movements she fancied herself to be controlling with despotic power. Perhaps they were laughing at her,—perhaps deriding her fruitless attempts to keep them asunder!—

In the irritation of the moment, she rose from her seat, and directed her steps across the room, to the very spot where Sidney Hammond was standing,—the diamond ornaments scattered over her dress glittering the more from the unusual vivacity of her movements;—and, in defiance of her habitual caution, indifferent, apparently, to the probability of being overheard, she hastily accused him, not only of breach of compact, but insinuated that his good under-

standing with her daughter was of older date than he cared to avow.

What an enhancement to the long-premeditated triumph of Sidney Hammond! With a graceful deference of manner, derived in a great measure from her Ladyship's especial schooling, he replied, that he trusted shortly to afford her an incontestible proof of the error into which she had fallen, by asking permission to present to her *his wife*, whose charms, though immeasurably inferior to those of Lady Harriet Bertie, were such as to bear him blameless against all possible accusations of attachment, or even undue admiration elsewhere.

For once, the woman of the world stood confounded. Though usually steadfast of countenance as Talleyrand himself, "poor Sidney" had the gratification of observing, even through her rouge, how her colour went and came, in the vexation of having made herself ridiculous, whether by jealousy of her daughter, or susceptibility on her daughter's account. She recovered herself, however, with the readiness of her vocation, and was prepared, in an instant, to

cover all consciousness of defeat, by expressions of warm satisfaction at the advantageous settlement in life of an acquaintance she had so long valued.

In reply to Lady Taunton's inquiry, whether "she had already the pleasure of the lady's acquaintance," great was the satisfaction of the expectant bridegroom, in replying, with an air of affected deprecation, that he "feared she moved in too obscure a circle of society, to have attracted the attention of Lady Taunton; being the only daughter of Mr. Hardington, Member for the Tower Hamlets, and better known in Lombard Street, than among the coteries of the *beau-monde*!" "Poor Sidney" was overjoyed to make it apparent, that he was nothing indebted for the wealthy connexion he was about to form, to the influence of the Taunton set.

But this was enough for the Countess. The match was just what she could have desired; securing independence to her former protégé, but leaving all the superiority of position on her side. Instead of having to feel that the man she had discarded had now the best of it, she

was able to intimate her gracious intentions to notice the object of his choice; nor was she slow in seizing the golden opportunity to prove the absence of all pique on her part, by the courtesy of her intimations concerning the future Mrs. Hammond.

His utmost hopes were thus accomplished; and the two intimate friends (supposed by the world to exceed, in their mutual regard, the bounds of friendship) parted with the delightful conviction of having humiliated and inflicted pain on each other:—such being the worthy results of worldly connexions!—

With a very light heart, accordingly, did the accepted lover proceed to Harley Street, the following day; Mr. Hardington having promised to absent himself from the city, in order to receive the momentous visit; and even had Hammond approached the door of the mansion he already foresaw in perspective as his own, with nervous feelings, they must have been reassured at once by the affectionate manner in which he was welcomed by his future father-in-law, a more experienced knave—we beg

pardon—a more accomplished *man of the day* than himself.

The negotiation opened between the *par nobile fratrum* was of the same diplomatic nature, as the preliminaries of a treaty between the plenipos of two minor states of the empire, each contriving to throw dust in the eyes of the other. Mr. Hardington was intent upon bestowing his portionless daughter on a man of fortune, with a trifling dowry, on pretext that the nature of his business prevented his giving money down during his lifetime, the better to ensure a noble fortune at his decease. “Poor Sidney” was equally desirous of apologizing for his deficiency of available funds, by referring to professional gains more than problematical. Both were bent upon deception. It was a realisation of the fable of the file and the viper: the city man being the deep old file, on which the man of the world found his fangs, for once, ineffectual.

Profound as was the amazement of both parties on finding the pleasant verdant declivity, down which they had been gliding, terminate

abruptly in a frightful abyss, each was cautious to betray no alarm at the prospect of the precipice. Each persisted in protestations of disinterestedness. Mr. Hardington declaring, that merit was all he sought in his son-in-law; Sidney Hammond, that there needed for his happiness, only the hand of his Louisa. For each had determined that the odium of a rupture of the negotiations should rest with his lawyer.

Meanwhile, the victim of these two worldly men,—the poor, open-hearted girl, whose affections had been engaged on such false pretences,—was again exposed to professions of tenderness that rendered her gentle heart only too happy. Alas! how little did she imagine that she was listening to them for the last time! Unversed in the tactics of the Taunton set, unversed in *any* tactics save those arising from the suggestion of the best feelings of her sex, poor Louisa did not perceive that the part of excellent dissembling assumed towards her, was less excellently played than usual;—that, already, the approaching catastrophe had its influence, and the indignant lover;—the biter bit,—scarcely patience to main-

tain his show of attachment towards a girl of whose fondest affections he had possessed himself, little supposing her to have a pitiful fortune of five thousand pounds.

After quitting the house,—and quitting it with all the outward demonstrations of love becoming the occasion,—Sidney Hammond could scarcely restrain the outburst of his rage. Never had he been so completely “poor Sidney” as at that moment! Duped,—deceived,—taken in his own toils, how was it possible to sustain the shock of such an overthrow!

Not that, at present, he entertained the smallest surmise of the *real* state of the case. He felt convinced that Mr. Hardington was either prevented by avarice from doing justice to his only daughter; or that, having discovered the state of his finances, he was in hopes, by the penuriousness of his proceedings, to break off the connexion. In either case, his views were equally frustrated. In either case, it was out of the question, to make one of the loveliest and most amiable girls in England, a stepping-stone to his fortunes.

CHAPTER VII.

FEW themes on which mankind have exercised their eloquence more fluently than the inconstancy of woman!—In prose and verse, romance and reality, it has been agreed for ages that the uncertainty of the wind is steadiness itself compared with the fickleness of the sex.

Yet whenever some warm-hearted girl like Louisa Hardington, on being thrown off by the man who has deliberately engaged her affections, finds it difficult to recall the rich treasure so fatally thrown away, how little are her sufferings compassionated! That she should presume to persist in loving the man who has ceased to love *her*,—or rather ceased to *pretend* to love her,—is treated as an impertinence,—as want of knowledge of the world,—as “missishness.” Having once received notice, in the altered attitude of

the man so long enchained at her feet, that her affection has become importunate, she is expected to surmount, in a day, a feeling which, but a few days before, she was implored to perpetuate for life ;—a feeling that has become part of herself,—vivifying every pulse of her existence, and tinging it with bitterness or joy.

When, in the course of the evening following their mutual explanations, Mr. Hardington received a letter from Sidney Hammond, expressing deep regret that the limited nature of Louisa's fortune, combined with her habits of life and the education she had received, must prevent him from realizing "the dearest wish of his heart," the infuriated father seemed to expect that a few execrations bestowed upon the name of the man he had hitherto praised so highly, would suffice to alter in a moment the feelings of his daughter ; whereas at first, poor Louisa had naturally perfect faith in the sincerity of her lover's regrets, and saw in his conduct only the inevitable result of the deception practised upon him. The desperate nature of her father's position being still a secret, there

was no reason to mistrust Sidney Hammond's professions of being unwilling to tear her from the comforts of such a home as hers, in order to share the privations of a man of humble fortune.

Under such circumstances what grounds had she for withdrawing her affections? On the contrary, while regretting her father's disappointment at the discovery of her lover's want of property, she saw only a stronger cause for attaching herself to the man so much less prosperous than she had supposed. He had become "poor Sidney" in her secret prayers and aspirations, in a very different sense from that assigned to the disparaging appellation by the Countess of Taunton!—

But all this was nothing to the Surfaceite. Throughout the affair, he never gave a second thought to the feelings of the girl who believed herself a first object to him. All he considered was, the aspect the rupture would assume in the eyes of the Taunton set;—and by what adroit colouring he might best disguise the nature of his disappointment. Nay, before three days had

elapsed from the withdrawal of his pretensions to the hand of Louisa, he was looking round him for a fresh heiress. The season was only beginning. Before its close, some opportunity might be found to recommend himself anew to the favour of the Countess of Taunton.

Among the monied people with whom he had lately permitted himself to associate, were several families on which it would have suited him well enough to engraft himself. But he was afraid of the attempt. Though there was nothing in his conduct which Mr. Hardington was, as a father, entitled to resent, it was impossible to guess in what light the city merchant might choose to represent it. Better turn to a new orbit for the furtherance of his projects.

To be deceived a second time with respect to the solidity of the fortune of his future wife, would have been too annoying; for "poor Sidney" could not afford to throw away his time as he had lately done, in fruitless speculations. When, therefore, he made up his mind to try his luck with a certain pretty little Irish widow, a Lady Lætitia de Burgh, who, on seeing him

on such familiar terms at Altamont House with the fashionable Lady Taunton, had expressed a wish to make his acquaintance, and who was reported to have a jointure of two thousand a-year, and a reversion of considerable magnitude secured to her on the death of an elderly relative,—he was careful to obtain as much information concerning the will of the late Sir Cornelius de Burgh, as Doctor's Commons is always ready to supply for twelvepence, lawful coin of the realm.

The result was satisfactory; *so* satisfactory that Hammond, free from all scruples of delicacy towards the Hardingtons, (by one of whom at least he pretended to think himself unhand-somely used), lost no time in devoting himself to the lively widow. Lady Lætitia was an accomplished horsewoman; and well was it worth his while (having no further measures to keep up with a city man by pretended attention to his profession) to exchange his showy phaeton for a good park-horse, to parade the dusty lengths of Rotten Row; where, at that period, female equestrians were as one to fifty in the present

day. He was aware of appearing to great advantage on horseback, like most men who have not acquired a good seat and slouching gait by feats of sportmanship; and became all the more delighted with the fair one to whom he was dedicating his time and attention, when he found himself shining in the eyes of the world; which perfectly approved that, having no duties to perform either at Brookes', White's, or the House of Commons, he should devote his leisure to so pretty a woman.

And what a relief to his feelings was the pleasant company of a rattle like Lady Lætitia, after the dull formalities of the society in which he had been recently martyred! The Irish widow was one who "said everything;" and of whom "everything" was accordingly said in return; but turning a deaf ear to the sayings that regarded her, Sidney Hammond listened solely to her own. Fresh from the court of Dublin, at a period when Dublin still possessed what might be called a court, she was full of pleasant anecdotes of pleasant people; and even the Prince was supposed to take delight in the

laughing eyes and merry repartees of Lady Lætitia.

London, as if in revenge upon the stiff etiquettes of the court, still permitted itself the indiscretion of masquerades ; and the Pantheon and Argyle Rooms were propitious scenes for his new courtship, of a nature so far more free and unguarded than it would have been permitted him to devote to the young daughter of Mr. Hardington. Of Lady Lætitia's house, he had the unlimited *entrée* ; frequently invited to dinner, and regular in his morning attendance as her horse and groom. It is true, the envied privilege was shared with half-a-dozen other admirers,—*not* good men and true, but, like himself, bad men and false. But he had little fear of even the most attractive among them ; and would probably have hazarded his proposals after a very short acquaintance, but that he feared deference to the opinion of the world might prompt her to refuse an offer so rashly hazarded ; whereas, by coquetting a little with the pretty widow, he trusted that his hand and heart would acquire double value in her sight.

To all appearance, these amiable intentions were reciprocal. As regarded coquetry, Lady Lætitia was fully a match for any Sidney Hammond in the land; and but that her Ladyship's days of sunshine were so bright and pleasant, he would scarcely have found patience for the frequent storms that darkened his atmosphere, or darted around him their sinister coruscations. But "poor Sidney's" course of seasoning in the Taunton set, having accustomed him to such caprices, Lady Lætitia could scarcely have selected a more patient *souffre douleur*. He was, in fact, better pleased to be made the butt of her good or ill-humour,—alternately coaxed or scolded,—than to share the calm indifference of her deportment towards others of her admirers; more especially Lord Robert de Burgh, a grave cousin of her late husband, and Sir Henry Winston of the Guards, whom every one but Lady Lætitia called Harry Winston, but whom *she*, as if the more to mark her displeasure at his assiduities, invariably addressed with coldness and reserve.

Even in Lady Lætitia's most whimsical mo-

ments, Sidney Hammond would have been sorry to exchange entreatment with Sir Henry. For "poor Sidney" was apparently ignorant of the aphorism, that love converts a prude into a coquette,—a coquette into a prude,—the grave to gay, the gay to grave;—and that the passion so apt to revolutionize human nature, may be estimated in force by such an influence over the character. A man less pre-absorbed by his own interests, would have inferred from the exceptions made by Lady Lætitia in favour of Lord Robert de Burgh and Sir Henry, that their influence over her feelings was far more considerable than his own.

To Lady Taunton, meanwhile, he gave himself the airs of having reluctantly renounced the Hardington connexion, "in consequence of the extent of sacrifices exacted of him;" the word "sacrifices" being a favourite one with the Surfaceites, as equally vague and comprehensive. Her Ladyship was, of course, at liberty to infer that Miss Hardington had demanded the "sacrifice" of memories of former attachment; or that her father, who was an ultra-Tory, (as

yet Conservatives were not), the "sacrifice" of his liberal political associates. To which alternative she leaned, it is needless to conjecture; but when, shortly afterwards, she beheld the perfidious Sidney performing the part of Master of the Horse to the rich widow, she decided that either he wished to conceal from the world his disappointment as regarded his pretty *fiancée*, or that he was becoming a regular fortune-hunter.

Of Louisa's disappointment, *who* thought, or *who* cared?—Indignant against himself for having been, as he considered it, taken in, Mr. Hardington visited upon the poor girl the irritation of his spirit; accusing *her* of the vexation and expense he had wantonly incurred; but, above all, exacting her unhesitating encouragement of the addresses of an elderly Portuguese merchant of considerable fortune, to whose addresses he had hitherto turned a deaf ear. Vainly did Louisa Hardington plead that her affections were engaged! She was told that a girl endowed with becoming feminine modesty does not bestow her affections till she

gives them at the altar; and on remonstrating that, right or wrong, she *had* infringed this severe prohibition, she was taunted with her want of pride in continuing to love the man who had so readily cast her off,—who had never been sincerely attached to her,—who had sought her only in the belief that she was rich and prosperous.

Still, these threats and tauntings on the part of Mr. Hardington availed him nothing; for in the innocent heart of his daughter, abided the pure and fervent faith of woman's love; and she was incapable of surmising the treachery which might have justified a change in her feelings. As she neither rode, nor frequented Pantheon masquerades, nor the brilliant circles in which "poor Sidney" was now devoting himself to the Irish widow, her ignorance of his proceedings left her still a pretext for affection.

Sidney Hammond, meanwhile, was becoming inaugurated into a wholly different species of existence. Instead of the prudent, good sense of Miss Hardington, he had to deal with the

thoughtless whims of a madcap ; who, from mere indiscretion, did not hesitate to accept trifling obligations from one having the habits and pretensions of a man of fortune. Lady Lætitia had not time to take heed of such trifles ; and the ever-ready suitor was daily and hourly despatched for the execution of commissions,—to fetch boxes for the play or opera,—to order new whips, new saddles, new books, new engravings, as if he were already an accepted lover, or rather as if Lady Lætitia already wrote herself Hammond instead of De Burgh ; while Sir Henry Winston, so far from being honoured with her Ladyship's commissions, was allowed to remain all day unnoticed in her drawing-room, while the fortunate Sidney scoured all London in her behalf ;—nay, more than London, for he was occasionally despatched as far as Hammersmith, to Lee and Kennedy's, in search of some rare exotic for her fanciful Ladyship's bouquet.

A pleasant task enough, to become a courier to so fine a lady, in weather *as fine* ! But at the end of the first month's courtship, though

Lady Lætitia's invariability of temper had prevented any positive advances in her favour,—since she frowned back the latter part of the week, the very assiduity she had sanctioned in the commencement,—poor Sidney found himself a quarter of a year's income out of pocket. For the commissions, however costly, imposed upon him, gallantry, of course, forbade him to leave to the credit of his liege lady. But all this mattered nothing. "To angle with a golden hook," though contrary to the policy of Julius Cæsar, is a favourite tenet of Surfaceism; and the rich jointure and reversion glittering before his eyes, would have determined him to make the hundreds expended, thousands, in the service of Lady Lætitia de Burgh.

Engrossed by his new pursuit, Sidney Hammond took no further thought of the Hardings than if London had not contained such a spot as Harley Street; though, had the old phaeton still remained in his service, the horses, more faithful than their master, would probably have been unable to pass through Cavendish Square without pulling towards the former scene

of their daily attendance. But though secure among his present associates from collision with the city set, at places of public resort he occasionally came in contact with those who, ignorant of the rupture, *would* inquire of him after the friends who were no longer so much as his acquaintance!

One night, at Ranelagh, for instance, when after escorting Lady Lætitia to her carriage, he returned a moment to the fête in search of Lord Robert de Burgh, who had promised him a seat in *his*, as far as Brookes's,—he was accosted by a young man, whose exaggerated style of dress rendered him an unwelcome companion to such a maccaroni as Sidney was becoming, even had he not pestered him with inquiries of “When he had last seen the Hardingstons;” and whether “he did not agree in his opinion, that the Bristol waters would be ineffectual in restoring the lost bloom and broken health of poor Louisa?”

Even on hearing this, the seared conscience of Sidney Hammond felt no shame! It was not *his* fault if her father were so shabby a

fellow as to render impossible a marriage that would have secured Miss Hardington's happiness, and forestal all necessity for Clifton. It was not his fault if a disappointed Marylebone Miss, desirous of shining in the great world as his wife, were suffering from the effects of an ambition thrown into the system.

With the most complete *sang-froid*, accordingly, and still looking around him through his eye-glass for "his friend, Lord Robert," he expressed his regret to hear of Miss Hardington's indisposition, and cited various instances of cures effected by the Hot-wells. — "In *his* opinion, her father could not do better than take her to Clifton!" —

CHAPTER VIII.

THOUGH Lady Taunton perfectly approved the projected union of her protégé which would intitle her to patronize his wife, she was less pleased on learning and perceiving the favour in which he stood with the pretty little Irish widow patronized by the Prince. Nevertheless, her mind misgave her, that even with Lady Lætitia's ignorance of the London world, she would scarcely throw away her brilliant advantages by a marriage with a young Templar of such moderate condition; and it was more for the gratification of her curiosity on this point than from a feeling of jealousy, that the Countess, whose acquaintance with her was slight, invited her one evening to Taunton House.

Sidney Hammond literally trembled when he heard of the invitation! Two imminent risks

awaited him. Lady Lætitia, who had not yet set foot within the sanctuary of the *élite* of London society, would either command triumphant success, and acquire ambitions fatal to his prospects; or her brogue and oddities of manner and idea would expose her to ridicule,—a ridicule necessarily extending to her admirers. To prevent her accepting the invitation, however, he was too cunning to attempt;—having learned from experience the efficacy of opposition, on all occasions, in confirming the intentions of the wilful little beauty.

Neither acquiescence nor remonstrance, however, would, on this occasion, have altered Lady Lætitia's intentions. Enchanted to find herself sought by those whose acquaintance all London was seeking, she repaired to Taunton House, highly amused at "poor Sidney's" irritation at the neglect of his former friends.

Allusion has been already made to the unfavourable influence exercised in society by the excessive rigour of Queen Charlotte in the formation of such opposite circles as the Taunton set. But the high colouring of this little

group of pretty and witty *vauriens* was colourless beside the dare-all doings of the Vice-regal Court, from which Lady Lætitia de Burgh had recently emanated ; and welcome indeed was the accession of so lively and reckless a member to the circle whose factitious spirits were somewhat apt to flag. Having laughed at the wit of Fox, Hare, and Sheridan, till they were tired, the blunders, brogue, and audacity of Lady Lætitia were a charming relief.

From the conversation of Sidney Hammond she had gathered sufficient information concerning the secrets of her new associates, to render the edge of her irony somewhat alarming ; and the moment Lady Lætitia discovered, from an indiscreet remark of General Fitzpatrick that she had been invited to make sport for the Philistines, she retorted with a more than sufficient share of national humour.

It happened that, at the moment she entered the room, three of the most fashionable beauties present were laughing immoderately at the recollection of an insult they had offered from Lady Taunton's box at Covent Garden,

the preceding night, to that accomplished actress, Miss Brunton, (an object of jealousy to one of the party),—by which she had been so much overcome as to burst into tears.

“ Sure ye remind me,” cried Lady Lætitia, exaggerating her usual brogue, for the gratification of their malice,—“ of a scane that happened in our own Theatre-royal, Dublin,—where three women of *ton*, as they called themselves, (the top o’ the tree,—like yerselves), were in the stage-box, whooping and coughing, and laughing their hearts out, till they made the poor young cratur of an actress who was playing Lady Towneley, stop short in her part.—’Pon which, a young student of the univarsity,—neither more nor less than the present Sir Paul J——, jumped up in the middle o’ the pit, t’ address the audience ; and says he, ‘ Leedies and Gentlemen, I insist upon it,’ says he, ‘and I know you’ll maintain me in the proposition, that *those three drunken officers dressed up as leedies*, in the stage-box,’ says he, ‘be turned out of the house!’ ”*

* Fact.

A dead silence followed this daring sally. But Lady Taunton, not choosing to accept the covert affront, soon recovered herself sufficiently to laugh off the attack.

"You surprise me, my dear Lady Lætitia!" cried she. "I had always heard your countrymen cited as remarkable for their chivalry. And to sanction a public attack upon three women!—I never should have expected it."

"Surely not,—if they *had* been women," cried Lady Lætitia, with unabated spirit. "But those who dared to insult a poor cratur of their own sex, in an inferior station, surely forfeited all claim and privilege belonging to it! And the audience was of the same way o' thinking; for, without more ado, they set up three cheers for Sir Paul;—and, betwixt you and I, the drunken officers in women's clothes, as they were called by the people, had a hard matter to get out of the house without mobbing."

The entrance of Tommy Townshend, one of the brilliant luminaries of the Taunton set, fortunately diverted the attention of those who had some right to be offended at the imperti-

nence (by inference) of the Irish widow; for all ears and voices became absorbed in a discussion of the stormy proceedings of the House of Commons the preceding night, concerning some increase of the establishment of the Prince of Wales.—A change of administration was anticipated from the measure; and it was confidently asserted that ministers had resigned!

From the politics connected with the affairs of the Prince, the transition was easy to his follies; and though Lady Lætitia had taken no share in the discussion of the discomfiture of Charles Jenkinson and his junta, she was quite ready to discuss the white satin hangings* of Perdita's opera-box, which, at that moment, excited a general outcry against the weakness of the Heir-apparent in ministering to her profligate extravagance.

"For my part," said Lady Lætitia, "I think Mrs. Robinson *perfectly* right to distinguish her box from those of her *collagues*!—The

* Fact.

Prince has so many favourites among the women of character, that, in chintz, THE Sultana might have been overlooked !”

Again did a dead silence prevail in the little circle ; and the Taunton set were perhaps of opinion that, for once, the Irish shamrock might have borrowed the motto usually accompanying the Scottish thistle. At all events, they refrained from further attempts to meddle with or show up the Dublin belle ; but fell upon a subject which the recent confirmation of the Independence of America brought as much under discussion as lately,—the boundary line of the States,—which the entrenchments of Boston rendered somewhat more definite than an Ashburton treaty.

The following day Sidney Hammond discerned, in a moment, from Lady Lætitia’s slight and careless sketch of the amusements of Taunton House, that though she had made enemies of all those it was his desire to conciliate, she had obtained among them a degree of ascendancy more valuable than popularity. No fear of their receding from Lady Lætitia

Hammond! On the contrary, he was convinced that they would rejoice in the expectation of taming down the rampancy of one who attacked them in so audacious a spirit, by the influence of one of their most zealous ædiles; and on receiving from the Irish beauty an invitation to accompany her the following night to Vauxhall, then in the zenith of fashion, he determined on bringing matters to a crisis with the woman who had subdued those of whom he stood so much in awe.

In the interim, however, he was fated to be startled by an event inducing him to believe himself an especial favourite of the blind goddess. By some miracle he had escaped an avalanche, and been held back by a single hair on the brink of a precipice! The name of "JOHN ELEAZAR HARDINGSTON, Merchant," appeared that day in the *London Gazette*!

"You *knew* it: I am convinced you were aware of what was coming, and on that account declared off!" whispered Lady Taunton, stopping to accost him for a moment, as she was hurrying to her chair after the opera, but rather

to afford an opportunity for conversation between the Marquis and her daughter who were following her, than for any interest she took in the affairs of "poor Sidney. "Accept my hearty congratulations on your foresight. But, *entre nous*, take care that your Irish widow do not prove an equally slippery bargain!"

As he was about to request an explanation of this ambiguous phrase, the Taunton party passed hastily on, and, a moment afterwards, the footmen, brandishing their flambeaux before the sedan of the Countess, threw the light upon her face sufficiently to prove that the bitter smile with which she uttered her mysterious warning, was in no haste to vanish from her features.

While still deliberating, next day, over her Ladyship's adjuration, he had the vexation to receive a few lines from Mr. Hardington, dated from his villa at Fulham, and earnestly requesting a few minutes' conversation. For Sidney Hammond had flattered himself, on perusing the announcement in the *Gazette* of the preceding evening, that he was on sufficiently bad

terms with the father of Louisa, to be exonerated from the necessity of so much as inquiring after him under his misfortunes; and to be thus speedily addressed by the bankrupt, was a most disagreeable surprise! He could have little doubt that to request pecuniary assistance, must be the object of the distressed man,—assistance he had never felt less inclined to concede, than to one who had so nearly allured him into the bosom of a ruined family. Or perhaps, Mr. Hardington intended to offer him the hand of Louisa;—insisting on his often-repeated declarations, that it would suffice, portionless, to his happiness; and assuring him that, in the altered state of the affairs of the family, *any* establishment he might be able to accomplish, would content the modest views of the bankrupt's daughter, whose small fortune, secured by her mother's settlement, was intangible by the creditors.

To expose himself to the annoyance of having to declare the insincerity of former protestations, was, in Sidney's opinion, superfluous; more especially as the father might so persist as to ne-

cessitate an explanation of his new views and entanglements. He contented himself, therefore, with a formal expression of regret that the multiplicity of his engagements prevented his driving so far as Fulham, and requesting to know, by letter, Mr. Hardington's "commands."

To this harsh letter, he somewhat anxiously expected the answer; dreading that it might convey overtures impossible to accept, though unpleasant positively to reject. But when two days passed over without a reply of any description, he began to hope that the ruined merchant considered him unworthy of further notice; or that, amid the press of business attending his bankruptcy, he had received succours from truer friends, or found means to dispense with them.

Sidney Hammond was only the more at leisure to concert plans for his anxiously-expected explanations with Lady Lætitia; who, throughout the evening at Vauxhall, chose to adhere as closely to the arm of her kinsman Lord Robert de Burgh, as a limpet to a rock;—and who, he season being far advanced, was already talking

of a migration to the little fishing-town of Brighthelmstone, frequented by all the Taunton set in emulation of the Prince; who was beginning to spend all his leisure on those burning cliffs, at the feet of one already talked of as clandestinely his wife.

He was uncertain, moreover, at that moment, of being able to procure an invitation to a select supper party, to be given that night by Lady Clermont, at her charming house in Berkeley Square; and a message having been announced to him, which, believing it to regard the supper party, he chose to receive in person, great was his vexation on discovering that the man described to him as one of the helpers of the Taunton House stables, was simply an errand-man from some Fulham coach-office!—Mr. Hardington, unwilling, apparently, to write a second time, had despatched this unceremonious messenger, as fast as his cart could bring him, to entreat Mr. Hammond would lose no time in hastening to Fulham. •

Either the man understood not the purport of the message, or the recipient was too proud to

make inquiries ;—for in the unchanged belief that the application was that of a drowning man catching at a straw, and making a few last appeals to the generosity of his friends, Sidney Hammond despatched an answer that might have been termed brutal, had it emanated from the lips of a less practised man of the world.—

“His compliments, and he would ride down to East Lodge the first cool day. But having no close carriage, the present state of the weather rendered riding impossible.”

This pretext he conceived to be a safe put-off ; for, on a favourable change of weather, Lady Lætitia was to leave town for her new residence on the Steyne, to which she had consented, or to which he fancied she had consented, that he should bear her company. No fear, therefore, that he should be compelled to fulfil his indefinite engagement to the troublesome people at East Lodge ; and his last reflection concerning the Hardingtons that night, when, by a tardy and grudging invitation from the fastidious Viscountess, he was entitled to join the brilliant party in Berkeley Square, was, that it is very odd,

when people are ruined, they cannot be ruined and have done with it, without boring all their acquaintance with their misfortunes. For next to the troublesome ghost of man or wife, returning to their *lares* and *penates* at the close of the vidual year, the most importunate of visitations is that which comes to remind the heart of man of its fickleness to the vows it has sworn, and the fidelity it has outraged. The name of Hardington was now every way most offensive to "poor Sidney!"

That night, a dewy delicious summer night, such as so often crowns a midsummer day, Lady Clermont had caused her fine apartments to be profusely decorated with flowers;—and the windows being thrown open to the utmost, the scent of vegetation arising from the gardens of the Square, as well as from those nearly adjoining, of Lansdowne and Devonshire houses, created an atmosphere as nearly resembling the freshness of the country, as a metropolis can well afford. At the close of that brilliant supper, a whispering conversation commenced at table between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert,

(and between Colonel St. Leger and Lady Taunton, by way of keeping them in countenance), which drove all the good courtiers present to the remoter windows. *There* it was that Sidney Hammond, while pretending, like the rest, to listen to the rustling of the abele trees in the moonlight, and enjoy the calm and dewy fragrance so welcome after the heats of a London day, fancied he perceived, on his sudden approach, the hand of Lady Lætitia de Burgh gently withdrawn from that of Sir Henry Winston! To be withdrawn, however, it must for a time have rested there;—a cruel contingency for the surmises and susceptibility of even a fortune-hunting lover!

To remonstrate in the midst of such a circle, would have been fatal to his interests; and Hammond was thankful to a cloud which at that moment lightly veiled the brightness of the moon, so as to conceal his confusion of countenance. Moreover, as is usually the case where moonlight, fine ladies, and fine gentlemen, are united together,—particularly after a due allowance of chicken, lobster salad, and cham-

pagne,—a prodigious deal of nonsense was in process of emission concerning that changeable luminary, such as served to excuse the silence of the usually voluble Sidney ; whose thoughts, by some strange coincidence, were carried back just then to the image of poor Louisa ! For it had been one of the favourite visions of their courtship to anticipate the summer evenings they should enjoy together in the beautiful gardens of her father's villa ; and it was almost with shame he recalled to mind the strength and fervour of the protestations he had both made and exacted, of the eternal fidelity which was to sanctify those midnight moonlight rambles !—A momentary chill seemed to run through his frame, as he gazed upon the dewy grass, and reflected how lonely must be the walks of the gentle and unhappy creature, whose destinies he had blighted !

But his compassion was thrown away !—He had NOT blighted them !—At the very moment that icy thrill pervaded his frame, the spotless soul of Louisa Hardington had entered into its rest. While he, the worldling, stood

there amid that titled horde of the vain and worthless,—women of doubtful, and men of more than doubtful character, yet despised even by *them*, *she* was ascending to the realms of light, the appropriate atmosphere of her enfranchised and purified spirit.

The hurried letter, addressed to him a few days before by Mr. Hardington, had been written by Louisa's bed-side, and by her desire, on the first intimation of the physician that her hours were numbered. By such an announcement, the seal was removed from her lips; and she addressed her father in terms which caused even *his* hardened heart to tremble within him.—Not that she upbraided him—not that she spoke harshly; but there were daggers in the gentle resignation with which she recapitulated the brief, but fatal, story of her life. She spoke of herself and *him* as martyrs to appearances,—to Surfaceism;—*imploring*, rather than exhorting him, to turn to the True and Real, as the only certain sources of happiness, here or hereafter.

But above all, she entreated permission to

send for the man she had so dearly loved, that she might implore and warn him too, "lest he also should come to that place of torment." And Hardington, who, like Felix, "trembled, rebuked by judgment to come," instantly acquiesced in her dying prayer. He wrote, but he wrote in vain; and his surprise almost equalled his disappointment. For he had forgotten, in the anguish of his daughter's death-bed, the ill savour of poverty attached to his name. Even he—the speculator,—the heartless, callous mercenary,—forgot, as he wiped the dew from that sweet and wistful face, that he was *now* "Hardington the bankrupt!"

Sidney Hammond's reply reached him on the spot from which he seldom stirred; and Louisa, on recognising that well-known handwriting, asked to look upon it for the last time. Too late to refuse!—though her father bitterly upbraided himself, while noting the change that came over her countenance during the perusal of the note. She said not a word, however; but closed her eyes, as if composing herself

to sleep,—probably to avoid her father's commentaries on the conduct of one who to *her* was all in all. But during her seeming slumbers, her lips were still moving;—either quivering with inward anguish, or articulating a repressed prayer for heavenly mercy towards him who had embittered her days with such gratuitous cruelty!

“There are so many women of the world, on whom he might have practised his deceptions without danger!” murmured the dying girl; “but I,—I had nothing but my warm affections!—And how freely I gave them to him.—But not—but *not for this!*”

At length she *really* slept; and in her almost delirious dreams, her tongue was loosed, and all she had been thinking and feeling burst incoherently, though faintly, from her lips; and the tears of the ruined man came down uncontrolled and unheeded, as he sat listening by that solitary bedside, and knew how wantonly he had sacrificed the happiness of his only child.

It was two days after this, on finding her

still weaker and more desponding, while watching the silent tears glide down her wan cheeks, and believing, and with truth, that they flowed chiefly from the dread of leaving the object of her faithful love unwarned by a word from her dying lips, that Mr. Hardington (in the excitement of beholding his poor Louisa revive from a state of insensibility which he had bewailed as death) despatched his abrupt message to Sidney Hammond. At the moment of sending it, the scarcely-conscious form of his child was resting in his arms; and even the servant to whom it was given, was too deeply touched by the plight of her lamented young mistress, to take heed to what manner of man the commission was entrusted, so that he promised to be faithful and expeditious. The messenger was accordingly ignorant of the purport of his errand.

When the chilling answer to those agonized entreaties for his instant presence at length arrived, no one was cruel or careless enough to repeat them in the chamber of death. In answer to Mr. Hardington's reiterated inquiries,

the waiting-woman continued to reply, that "Mr. Hammond was coming,"—that "Mr. Hammond was expected every moment;"—rightly conjecturing that the fruitless hopes she thus inspired would solace rather than disturb the last moments of the sweetest angel that ever fell a victim to the worldliness of social life.

For the spirit of the dying Louisa was as serene and subdued, as that of her brighter days;—no restlessness—no peevishness—no accusation. So long as her powers of sight were unimpaired, she lay watching the door; so long as her powers of hearing were available, she listened for the footsteps she loved so dearly.—But there came a time when the powers of life were gradually extinguished; when there was no longer sight in those helpless eyes, or sound in those powerless ears; though still there abided an inward steadfastness of love, which centred the last thoughts of the dying girl into a prayer for *him*. Her life had been a life of Faith, Hope, and Charity,—these three.—But Hope was the last survivor;—

even the hope that she was hastening to eternal happiness, and that the object of her yearning affection might still be redeemed from evil to come.

CHAPTER IX.

THROUGHOUT that interminable evening, her father sat by her side, listening to her impeded respiration, and occasionally moistening her parched lips, or wiping her moistened brow. Louisa had entreated, ere consciousness and utterance forsook her, that the windows might be left open, to refresh her chamber with the summer sweetness of the gardens; and even that the watchlight might be removed, to enable her to enjoy unmolested the chastened moonlight gleaming upon her pillow;—so that the self-same light which called forth the wanton jests of the Taunton set, shone like a halo round the head of the dying girl;—till at last, and with a more subdued and deferential ra-

diance, it fell upon the sacred features of the dead !

Then came the unrestrained gush of sorrow of the conscience-stricken father,—and the few faithful attendants who knew her excellence, and had watched over her sufferings. Then came the muttered curses of old Hardington, which, but for the presence of death, would have deepened into frantic execrations on the name of the man who had embittered her last moments by withholding the poor alleviation of one word of sympathy !—At that moment, he felt that Sidney Hammond *had killed his child*,—yea, *killed her*, as with the edge of a sword !

As the bankrupt only retained possession of his villa by virtue of the medical certificate which declared that removal would be instant death to his daughter, it was necessary to accelerate, as far as decency would allow, his preparations for the humble funeral his present means enabled him to supply to her he had so long pampered in the lap of luxury ; nor was it judged necessary for the newspapers to announce the decease of one rich only in beauty and virtue.

The death of Louisa was consequently as little known or noted as that of some flower of the field ; and the world went on,

Without one laugh the less, one tear the more,
That she was gone who joined its mirth before.

Nor was " poor Sidney " ever in greater spirits than on the very evening the undertakers were closing in for ever the now solemn face whence the tears were wiped for evermore.

That night, while the watch-lights were still set round the coffin of Louisa Hardington, he was the gayest guest at a supper given by Lady Lætitia de Burgh, to assemble around her the little knot of friends about to be dispersed by her departure for Brighthelmstone the following day.

As the merry little banquet drew to a close, Hammond, who was seated beside the lady of the house, grew more than ever tender in his professions, more sanguine than ever in his hopes. The time was not far distant, he hoped, when that agreeable house and well-ordered establishment would be submitted to his authority,

—that massive plate—those generous wines—and last, (and least,) that pretty little woman, be all his own.—It was a pleasant prospect; and, combined with copious draughts of sparkling champagne, enhanced by the exquisite singing of the Sheridans, who, with Lady Taunton and her daughter, were of the party, melted his soul within him, almost to ecstasy.

Under the influence of such feelings, he pressed and pressed, with tenderest whispers, for a favourable answer to his petition for a place in the carriage of Lady Lætitia to Brighton, the following day.

“You must ask permission of Sir Harry Winston!” was, at last, her undaunted reply. “Bridegrooms are not apt to encourage the presence of a third person *quite* so early in the honeymoon. Nay, I might say a fourth; for, let me claim your congratulations on the only obstacle to this happy marriage being removed, by Lord Robert de Burgh’s having consented to leave me the sole guardianship of my little girl! —The opposition of the executors of my late husband’s will, has alone retarded the avowal of

my approaching union with my dear Harry. But Lord Robert, having satisfied himself, by the habits of intimacy on which we have recently lived, that Harry will make the best of fathers to the dear child, has actually proposed to the chancellor my nomination as co-guardian with himself; and I am now the happiest creature in the world! By the way, I may thank *you*, my dear Mr. Hammond, for some portion of my good fortune; for had you not examined and given me your legal opinion upon my rights, or rather *want* of rights under the will, and advised me to surrender the guardianship of my poor little Augusta, I should not have seen the necessity of conciliating Lord Robert; without which, matters would never have reached their present happy state of pacification."

Eager congratulations from Lady Taunton and the rest of the party, recalled "poor Sidney"—(now poor Sidney, *indeed*!)—to the necessity of putting a good face upon the matter; and he soon began to talk of a visit to the Steyne at the end of the honeymoon, and of completing the *partie carrée* by pairing off with little

Augusta as if he had been fully prepared for the thunder-clap which had suddenly exploded over his head.

Nevertheless, though he was the first to propose healths, and perpetrated, in the course of the last few minutes he was ever to spend in the Taunton set, two bon-mots which provoked the laughter of Hare and the approving smile of Brinsley, Lady Taunton, an experienced judge of such symptoms, noticed that, though he had been tossing off glasses of iced champagne enough to produce a burning fever, his hands, when he assisted to put on her cardinal as she stepped into the carriage, were cold as marble!

That was an accursed night to Sidney Hammond! On his return to his chambers, he found his table covered with the season's bills, which the announcement of his intended departure to Brighton had caused to be sent in,—a somewhat substantial reminder of the ruinous extent to which he had carried his matrimonial speculations! For he had grudged himself neither enhancement nor adornment; and Lady Lætitia, heaven knows, had spared the designing bar-

rister no expense in the prosecution of his interested suit at Love.

And now, what was to become of him? So far from having progressed a single step towards reconciliation with the Taunton set, he had rendered himself so ridiculous in their eyes by his recent defeat, as to have lost even his honorary grade as a fashionable young man about town, ambitious of becoming somewhat more. A defeated man is ever an object of contempt, let the object he has attempted to conquer be what it may; and even in those days, administrations were careful against attaching to themselves any member peculiarly vulnerable to the shafts of ridicule.—For to be laughed at, is one of the most critical perils of a public man.

He was accordingly worse off than after his banishment from the Paradise of Taunton House. Poor Sidney had nothing in enjoyment,—nothing in prospect;—no pleasant country houses,—no excursion to Brighton,—no anything. Even the Bedford Square uncles would be less attainable now that rumours of

his conduct towards the Hardingstons were beginning to transpire; the Harley Street set having, since the bankruptcy of course, attributed his precipitate retreat to a rat-like instinct, forewarning him of the fate of the house. With diminished means and deteriorated reputation, he was consequently worse off than ever.

“At all events,” muttered the apostle of Surfaceism, in the course of that sleepless night, “I will take care the world do not find out the extent of my disappointment. I must continue to pass for having been in Lady Lætitia’s secrets; and impress people with an idea of my being on good terms with those unfortunate Hardingstons. I will ride down to Fulham this very morning—for the sooner I get Saladin to Tattersall’s the better, as I have no longer any use for him in the park.) Yes! I will ride down to Fulham, pretending to drop into breakfast in a friendly way. The air will do me good. I fear I drank too much champagne last night,—for I am deucedly feverish. Champagne? Ay, ay!—Long enough, I suspect, be-

fore I enjoy one of those charming *petits soupers* again !”

That summer morning was worthy to follow that summer night. The villa gardens of the suburbs were in their fullest bloom ; with thousands of roses dispensing their fragrance to the air, and the acacia trees shedding their profuse white blossoms like a pearly shower. Nothing could be sweeter or more genial than the season and the scene.

“ What a heavenly refreshment, after the heated atmosphere of the gorgeous *fêtes* I have been frequenting !”—mused “ poor Sidney ;” while, leaving the rein on Saladin’s neck, he took his way along a narrow lane, bordered on either side by beautiful gardens, with the birds singing in snatches in the shrubberies, and the bees humming among the flower-beds. “ How cheerful, yet how quiet these pleasant retreats ! How welcome after the noise, and jostle, the insolence and scorn of the throng I have sacrificed so much to propitiate ; and among whom, at two-and-thirty, I have not made a single friend ! If, at this moment, I were to throw

myself into the river which I see glittering yonder between the willows, not a human being would deign to notice my exit, beyond wondering at my folly—and observing, perhaps, that I was always a little wrong-headed!—Yes—*one*! That poor girl, I verily believe, *really* liked me! naturally enough, for I was the first man who ever paid her attention, and certainly took some pains to recommend myself;—more, perhaps, than I ought. But it was no fault of mine if her father thought proper to live beyond his means!”

At that moment, the sweetness, freshness, and verdure of the winding lane seemed suddenly obscured by a gloomy object that took possession of the pathway skirting the palings. The startled birds instantly deserted the shrubberies for a securer retreat; and, lo! the white acacia flowers, which before had fallen on the ground, now dropped upon the mourning cloaks and velvet pall of a funeral that was passing along the road;—a walking funeral—followed by a single chief mourner, and one or two sobbing women, apparently servants.

"I thought I heard the sound of a funeral bell pealing along the water from Fulham Church!" mused Sidney Hammond, as the gloomy procession came in view,—about which, from its want of funeral pomp, he concerned himself no more than he would have done for some pauper's burial emerging from an hospital.

Apprehensive, however, that the sable array, in so confined a space, might startle his high-bred horse, (accustomed only to the pleasant sights and sounds of the ring and a London afternoon) he drew up, and turned the tossing head of Saladin towards the opposite palings; a movement *apparently* suggested by feelings of respect towards the mournful procession.

But the spirited horse being thus reined in, all was silence in that secluded spot; so that the tramp of the approaching coffin-bearers conveying the child of clay to a still more silent home, became painfully audible. There seemed to be a sad incongruity between that measured tread and black array, and the

green and sunny scene constituted by the Almighty for pleasant sights and associations. A feeling of terror and loathing, like the sickening awe that arises in the heart of childhood in contemplating a funeral, oppressed the usually callous heart of Sidney Hammond; and but that the garden-paling restrained his movements, and thrust him almost into contact with the sable mutes preceding the coffin, he would have hurried from the spot.

But what were his emotions, what his self-rebuking, when, as the coffin borne past him seemed for a moment to shut out the sunshine from his eyes, he recognised in the chief mourner the wasted person and altered countenance of the bankrupt Hardington!

No need to inquire, as Laertes concerning the gentle Ophelia, the name of her they were conveying to the grave. A thousand voices seemed to shriek it into his ears; and a still small whisper to echo that fatal cry with still more solemn adjuration.—*Louisa was dead!* He had murdered her;—and all he could do in token of his tardy reverence for her sufferings,

was to raise his hat from his head, as her neglected corpse went by!—

Whatever might be the inward emotions of Sidney Hammond at this unexpected termination of one of the episodes of his career, he was careful to return to town with an unabashed and unmoved countenance. For he felt that, were he to betray unusual emotions on the wedding-day of Lady Lætitia Winston, the world to which he bowed the knee, would attribute his afflicted air to mortification. On entering his club that afternoon, therefore, he arrayed himself in his usual pearly smiles, and talked of his intended departure for the Isle of Wight, as if he had only remained in town to do honour to the nuptials of two of his intimate associates.

Some one present happened to mention, among the gossip of the day, the death of the only daughter of Hardington the member,—“Hardington the bankrupt.”

“The poor girl, it seems, could not survive her father’s downfall. Women have seldom courage to look ruin in the face,” added the

talker of small-talk. — “They are so cursedly selfish,—so wedded to their own little comforts. —Miss Hardington is far from the only fine lady who would sooner die than live without a carriage and opera-box. After all, I suppose her death will be rather a relief to her father, who has not a rap left.”

“He was always an extravagant man,” muttered Sidney Hammond,—to whom these observations were pointedly addressed. “But I confess I thought his daughter had more strength of mind.”

“One must not trust to appearances, my dear fellow,”—replied his companion. “We all thought *you* the pet of Taunton House, the lord and master (or slave) elect of Lady Lætitia de Burgh; yet how plaguily we were mistaken! —For your own sake, Sid., I trust you may not have shared our error!”

To demonstrate that he had NOT, became, of course, the immediate object of Sidney Hammond. In order to prove himself heart-whole and pocket-whole,—that he had been dismissed neither by a fair Countess, nor rich widow,—he

took care to flutter that autumn, the gayest of the gay, at a variety of public resorts. He appeared at Buxton, Harrogate, Scarborough,—which, as yet, had not ceded their vogue to the Spas of the continent—and spent the winter at Bath, distinguished alike by his minuet and his rubber.

His pains, however, were thrown away. Before the opening of a new London season, the Taunton set was broken up. The Countess having married her lovely daughter to her satisfaction, was gone to repair, by a couple of years' retrenchment on the continent, her costly series of London pleasures. The Winstons, too, were in Ireland; and, by the mere ordinary course of fashionable rotation, Sidney Hammond, without legitimate pretensions to a solid footing in the world of *ton*, found himself distanced by the new sets succeeding to the one, to establish himself in which, he had sacrificed so largely.

A few casual invitations, a few passing nods and salutations, were all that remained to him of his former brilliant popularity. Having been

once or twice seen looking somewhat seedy on the *pavé*,—without a phaeton,—without a horse,—without a seat in anybody's opera-box,—people began to discover that he had little or nothing to recommend him ; that “poor Sydney” had no “speciality” to entitle him to favour,—was not superlatively witty, superlatively well-looking, or superlatively well-bred, to excuse his want of birth and fortune. And, lo ! when next they met this mediocre Mr. Sidney Hammond, they passed by on the other side !—

CHAPTER X.

AT five-and-thirty, when crows'-feet begin to pucker the eyes, and silver hairs to blanch the head of a man about town, he loses the spirit and resolution indispensable to better the condition which the world has ascertained to be so meagre. Thwarted in his deep-laid projects, disappointed and peevish, Hammond had ceased to look forward; but contented himself with spending his life in small change, living from day to day, making as good a figure as he could, and avoiding, as far as he was able, the whips and scorns of the more insolent portion of society. He stuck to London because London still afforded him a few pleasant invitations; and, by sordid economy the rest of the year, contrived to make the sort of show, during the

season, of which a good club and good tailor afford the groundwork.

Every year, however, the invitations grew fewer and further between; and the show, such as it was, more difficult of accomplishment. By furnishing himself from second-rate shops, he was beginning to acquire the quizzical look which a man of forty, or five-and-forty, is sure to contract, if he affect juvenility of dress and manner, though unable to support the pretension by the fashionable suit of his clothes, the excellence of his horse, or the eminence of his social position. Many people began to call Sidney Hammond a bore, a prig, an old quiz;—for, instead of contenting himself with the matter-of-fact conversation current in the humdrum society into which he was progressing, he was always relating anecdotes and facetiæ of the Taunton set, now a thing of tradition;—and a man who invariably prefaces his remarks with, “I remember some years ago,” is sure to end with passing for superannuated:—anything older than of yesterday being obsolete in London small-talk.

Moreover, the order of people and order of things which his reminiscences regarded, was already out of favour with the world. There had been a great reaction in the opinions of society. The French Revolution, with its concatenation of horrors, had intervened; and the vulgar, unapt to mark their discrimination of shades and degrees of error, thought they could not protest too loudly their hatred and abhorrence of the liberalism which *they* chose to regard as the cause of the martyrdom of the king and queen of France, of the innocent Madame Elizabeth, and thousands of victims equally inoffensive. And thus the Whigs were, for a moment, in disrepute, because Robespierre was a ruffian.

Loudest, of course, among the disclaimers was the voice of Sidney Hammond; for in the Church-and-State class of roast-beef and plum-pudding fanatics, into which he had fallen from his high and palmy state, the name of Fox was as that of Antichrist. As to Horne Tooke and his pupil Sir Francis, Sidney Hammond knew that to avow the

smallest sympathy with such godless and lawless individuals, would be to take leave of turbot and saddles of mutton from Christmas to Midsummer. Like Peter, therefore, he denied his Master; and thenceforward set up a sort of modest "Toryism on conviction," which he knew would bring him in a yearly revenue of twenty dinners, between the Inns of Court and Bloomsbury; twenty more sober dowagerly entertainments; besides the *pis aller* of an indefinite number of miscellaneous but highly respectable family dinners, where the grace was long and commons short.

Not perhaps that Sidney ratted *solely* and wholly on the temptation of so many five-and-sixpences saved in his club account. He might possibly have persisted in dining virtuously seven days in the week on a fried whiting and cutlets, moistened by a glass or two of Bucellas, but that, among the Bedford Square uncles, there was a surly old bachelor, as stiff in Toryism as the clay of his Lincolnshire estate could make him; who had been toasting Billy Pitt in crusty old port till his temper resembled his potations.

During "poor Sidney's" youthful infatuation in the Taunton set, old Bob Hammond was never known to name him otherwise than "my ass of a nephew;" nor was it till he had persisted, for a series of years, in calling in Bedford Square every time the crusty old port and the gout got the better of the crusty old gentleman, (who pleaded guilty to the Income-tax Commissioners to the possession of eight thousand per annum), that he was induced to admit of his nephew, that, if

Thebes did his weak unknowing youth engage,
He chooses Athens in his riper age.

Sidney was now all for Bloomsbury and the "Heaven-born minister;" and Bloomsbury accepted its proselyte.

Had old Robert resided on Paddington Green instead of in Bedford Square, his prudent nephew would have found it equally convenient to "drop in" at the testy old gentleman's Sunday dinner-time, and fight over the debates of the week; allowing himself constantly to be defeated by his host, fencing with the arguments of Pitt,

(which fitted him much as the seven-league boots of the ogre fitted Hop-o'-my-Thumb, because they possessed the magic faculty of contracting to the size of the meanest capacity) ; and, having suffered himself to be gradually converted by the zeal of the heirless uncle, he followed up his game by renouncing such of his former high associates as had not been at the trouble of forgetting him. With such an object in view as the heirship of eight thousand per annum, it was worth his while to give up his whole time to study the caprices and prejudices of a man who was now little more than a bundle of prejudice and caprice..

The old gentleman meanwhile could not fail to be pleased with the conversion he had effected in his "ass of a nephew." To be secure of a partner at picquet and backgammon half the nights in the week, saved him a world of outlay in toadyism ; which he had hitherto found almost as expensive an article to lay in for home consumption, as the crusty old port. He had no longer need to purchase the evening visits of his apothecary, or of a few humble

friends, of whom a gouty chair had taught him the value. It is true, the needy and sneaking nephew, whom May Fair now regarded as a prig and a quiz, appeared to *him*, in spite of his crows'-feet and suit of pepper-and-salt, a very frisky young fellow. But, as he often observed, "a man must have time to sow his wild oats;"—and having been young himself, old Bob, at seventy-eight, had indulgence for the follies of old Sidney at eight-and forty. It obviated, moreover, his scruples about absorbing the leisure evenings of his nephew, to think of the serious advantage enjoyed by the recent convert, in spending his idle time with "a man whose principles were in the right place; instead of lounging it away among a set of mischievous democrats, like those with whom he had formerly consorted." Sidney Hammond could not but agree with him. It *was* a very *serious* advantage to him indeed! More especially when the old gentleman discovered that there were six evenings in the week to be devoted to backgammon, and one to family-prayers, in which his nephew's services as reader, had be-

come indispensable, so that the Tory proselyte had no longer a minute or opinion he could call his own.

Strange to tell, no sooner had the old gentleman squabbled and lectured his submissive nephew into the adoption of his principles, than he seemed to grudge them as though they were too good for him ; for he lectured and squabbled quite as much now that poor Sidney was bowing the knee to Baal by his side, as when he had withheld his worship. He was so little pleased to see an indigent kinsman enjoying the excellent political faith which was the best to be had for love or money by himself, a man of ten thousand a-year, that he made the new faith as irksome to his neophyte as lay in his power ; and, if poor Sidney did but repeat a few of the dogmas conned out of his book, would turn short round upon him with inquiries of, "what the devil *he* should know about the matter?"

Still, his cross must be borne. Sidney Hammond had left himself nothing for it but submission. In betaking himself to Toryism and Bedford Square, he had burnt his ships, and

blown up the bridge behind him. His hopes and fears, and the whole future of his worthless existence, were now invested in the contingencies of a last will and testament; and he must not, in a fit of petulance, blow over his house of cards.

Byron has assured us, that—

People living on annuities
Are longer-lived than others—

But there is a tortoise-like longevity in elderly relatives,

Like to a step-dame or a dowager,
Long-withering out a young man's revenue;

withering it out, in fact, till the said *young* man becomes old in his turn. Sidney Hammond, accordingly, waited and waited, with his hopes deferred and heart sick; watching the bilious complexion and palsied hand of the old man, who, in return, watched his watchfulness with unsuspected shrewdness. Though old and infirm, the Bloomsbury uncle was sufficiently

widely awake to discriminate between the adulation of a legacy-hunter, and the vigilance of kinsmanly regard. For Sidney was not a solitary adulator. "Where the carcase is, there shall the vultures be gathered together;" and there were divers pitiful fellows besides the seedy nephew, who accommodated their ambitious appetite to the meagre fare of the invalid and his stuffy apartments.

Among these, was a man high in the councils of the king, (who was now once more exercising his regal functions and presiding over the terrors of the war raging between England and France); and, despite the sanguinary and tumultuous nature of those councils, what is called a saint.—In the intervals of official labour, however, he made it an act of charity to bestow his tracts and company on the old valetudinarian, with whom he had become accidentally acquainted in the course of his public career; and of all his rivals, *this* was the man most feared and loathed by Sidney Hammond. There was something feline in his sleekness and meekness, which roused the kindred mistrust of the legacy hunter.

One day, having surprised his Whitehall competitor at the close of a visit to the sick man, (which had evidently been long and soothing, for there was a book of sermons, with certain leaves folded down, on the table between them, and the high sharp nose of the official was still bestridden by spectacles as though he had been reading to the invalid), scarcely had he taken his glozing soft-voiced leave, when the old gentleman, turning abruptly to Sidney, suddenly addressed him :—

“That is a godly and a tender-hearted man, if ever there breathed one!” said he. “He has pointed out to me, my dear nephew, circumstances concerning *you* which I own had escaped my attention. From your frugal habits of life and shabby appearance, (you will excuse my coming to the point), he is convinced you are in less prosperous circumstances than your friends could desire.”

A flush, to which they had been long unaccustomed, overspread the sallow features of Sidney Hammond. Was it possible that the man he had suspected of secretly undermining

his prospects, had done him so good a turn as recommend his necessities to the sympathy of his rich uncle ; and was old Hammond about to make a settlement upon him at last ?

“ With a degree of consideration for which I can never sufficiently thank him,” resumed the querulous treble of the old man, “ he has consequently offered me for you an appointment which has luckily fallen vacant in his department ;—an all-but sinecure,—attendance six hours or so, a-day, five times a-week, at the Treasury, and a salary of two hundred a-year,—just the sort of thing which you were telling me the other day formed the limit of your wishes ; and I can tell you, Sir, that though he presses it on your acceptance, there are two hundred names on his list of men highly recommended to him for clerkships !”

Sidney Hammond's heart swelled within him ! For so many years past had he considered himself on the brink of eight thousand a-year, that at nine-and-forty to find himself rated at the value of a clerkship of two hundred, was almost an insult.—Nevertheless, small as

was the salary, it considerably exceeded the modicum into which his own income had dwindled; and even had the offer been more modest, he felt that to refuse a favour provided for him by his uncle, such as it was, might perhaps deprive him of more important benefits. It was difficult, however, to assume the air of radiant gratitude expected at his hands.

"For my part," faltered the old man, "I know not how to be sufficiently thankful to my illustrious friend for his kind and noble consideration of me and mine. To my thinking, there cannot be a more decided proof of greatness of mind, than the acuteness of observation which led him to discover, without a hint on *our* part, the necessities of a perfect stranger."

Sidney Hammond longed to be affronted, and explode.—But a legacy-hunter may be defined, according to Champfort's definition of a courtier, "*homme sans humeur et sans honneur*;" and it was his cue to submit.

"So judicious, moreover!" observed the old gentleman, "to secure for you not only an increase of income, but an occupation for your

time ! He has probably noticed the quantity of leisure you have on your hands, as proved by the frequency of your visits here ; and has wisely decided that it is as great an act of Christian charity to provide work for an idle man in this dissolute metropolis, where

Satan finds some mischief still

For idle hands to do,—

as to augment your means of worldly comfort !”

Sidney Hammond sighed deeply as he tried to infuse proper ardour into his acknowledgements. To a man hungering after a fat legacy, it was a hard thing to be belaboured by so meagre a benefit ; but alas ! his future fortunes depended on his grateful acceptance. At all events, the duties imposed on him by his new place exonerated him from one-half of his attendance upon his uncle ; and of two disagreeable things, it was less laborious to sign his name three thousand times a-day on Government paper, than listen for the three-thousandth, to the history of the ailments and infirmities of Robert the Endless.

In spite of his good wishes, however, the valetudinarian went ailing and wailing on; and the office which Sidney Hammond fancied himself to be accepting for a term of months, had galled and thwarted him for years; when, by the blessing of Providence, a severe winter set in;—the price of coals rose,—quicksilver fell,—and with it, the wealthy old bachelor of Bedford Square!—

On receiving the intimation of his decease early one January morning from his uncle's apothecary, who had been sent for in the night, and as his note expressed it, "only to find the vital spark extinct,"—Sidney Hammond hastily accoutred himself in the customary suit of solemn black, which he had kept by him for twelve years past, to be in readiness to express his grief for his departed kinsman, (even till the cut thereof reminded the looker-on, more distinctly than pleasingly, of the exploded fashion of the last century)—and hurried to Bedford Square.

His official patron, however, was there before him; looking like a walking Book of Lamenta-

tions, and sadly inclined to expatiate, in lengthier prose than could be acceptable to the next of kin to a wealthy defunct awaiting the opening of a will, upon the transient nature of sublunary things.—Nay, there was a third person on the spot, with whose presence he could have equally dispensed;—the man of business of his late uncle,—the custodian of his testamentary dispositions,—being no other than the individual who had apprized him at Ranelagh, three-and-twenty years before of Miss Hardington's illness ; and who, having put away boyish things for the realities of life, was now one of the leading solicitors of the day.

Let us spare our readers the recital of the will ; for it is tedious enough to listen to the technicalities of such instruments, even when we trust to find our names therein inscribed in a manner satisfactory to our sense of personal merit. Suffice it that, after a preamble of the lengthiest, during the reading of which Sidney Hammond's ears became of the colour of red sealing wax with excitement, the late " ROBERT OPMAN HAMMOND of Puckerfen Hall, Lincoln-

shire," being in a sound state of body and mind, did appoint his illustrious friend the official, sole executor of that his last will and testament; whereby was bequeathed to him the whole estate of the testator, real and personal, in trust for the charities afterwards enumerated. In consideration of the trouble certain to accrue to him from such a trust, and of the liberal kindness with which he had studied the interests of the Hammond family by bestowing a suitable provision on his dear nephew, he was, moreover, constituted residuary legatee: and had Sidney presumed to resent this most Christian-like distribution of the family property, he must have been an ungrateful fellow;—for so far from omitting his name from the will, his affectionate uncle bequeathed him two hundred pounds as a mark of attachment, in addition to one of twenty mourning rings!—

Poor Sidney!—*poor old Sidney!*—In this instance, the Surfaceites had been two to one against him!—This last and worst disappointment occasioned a severe attack of nervous fever; which brought down his grey hairs in sorrow,

not to the *grave*, but the *ground*; adding a caoutchouc wig to the number of his grievances.

He survived, however, till within the last few years. Many of our readers must have noticed a spare, meagre, fractious official, whose deafness and blindness rendered him, till a short time ago, one of the many public nuisances of the Treasury. In his efforts to appear twenty years younger and more active than he really was, his blunders were incessant. Just, however, as the spruce, well-brushed, but nearly imbecile old clerk, was on the point of being superannuated, he died suddenly of a cramp in the stomach, from attempting to eat an ice at Grange's among his younger colleagues, when a hot jelly would have been more suitable to his years and the weather.

From loveless youth to unrespected age,

from unrespected age to an unlamented grave, was only a natural progress for the shallow egotist, who had commenced life with good abilities, a good reputation, and sufficient fortune. But he had lived *for shadows,—with*

shadows,—deaf to the severer truths of life and inaccessible to its more solid pleasures ; till at the close of life, there was not a human soul,—no, not even the Temple laundress, who laid out his remains,—to shed a tear over the unregretted apostle of worldly wisdom ; the heartless, soulless, and consequently worthless, MAN OF THE DAY !—

A

FRAGMENT FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

SQUIRE GANDERFIELD.

—“WHY exhaust our wits or patience in trying to account for our oddities of temper, any more than for the cubits of our stature or colour of our hair?—We may disguise the latter by pigments or a peruke;—we may exalt the former by high-heeled shoes or boots arched bridgewise from the ground; or curb and control our irregularities of nature, in deference to that great conspiracy against the liberties of the subject, called Society. But the five-feet-four,—the carotty poll—the love of black-letter books, new Hock, old claret, small lapdogs, penny-a-line laudations, or coronets and supporters, are weaknesses and defeatures altogether indelible,—the mark set upon us by the master hand!

For my own part, I wear my queernesses as

boldly and easily as I wear my old great coat. There be worse coats and worse natures going, of which the owners are not a bit ashamed. If the cut be not to the taste of my fashionable associates, let them cut it and *me*,—and be hanged. The coat is a good warm coat, and so is the temper. Both will last me, I trust, through many a hard winter yet; and a fig for the valet or sexton impatiently waiting for my spoils!

One of the most valuable lessons imparted by philosophy to the fools of this nether world is, neither to run counter to the majority, nor suffer ourselves to be overrun by them;—to have our own way, without putting ourselves in the way of other people. He who does this, is armed to the teeth against the whips, scorns, and oppressions of his great antagonist, the world;—that villanous top-sawyer who tyrannizes over every mother's son of us,—compelling us to toil and moil, up to our knees in sawdust, at the bottom of the gloomy pit called Human Life.

It is something to feel, at the close of our

career, that we have occasionally compelled the sawyer, who has so often the best of it, to take turn and turn about with us;—for whether we subdue the world per force of wit, beauty, strength, aptitude, lordly condition, or filthy lucre, we experience the same self-satisfaction in setting our foot on the neck of the enemy.

I am waxing prosy; but, trust me, vulgar reader, it is upon principle. Most popular writers prefix a solemn page or two to their light stories, as preachers a text; by way of shewing that they know what they are about, and could go on being tiresome to the end of the chapter, if they thought proper.

I do *not* think proper.—I seldom “think proper” on any possible subject;—because I think for myself, and myself happens to be a deuced odd fellow!—Besides, these moral rhetoricians are ever enlarging upon the march of intellect and refinement of the century; and for the soul of me, I cannot bring myself to commend the wisdom of an age which, till it was fifteen years old, submitted to the desperate

depletion of that cruel Dr. Sangrado, War ; and after attaining years of discretion, was reduced to bankruptcy by the *furor brevis* of bubble speculations !—The nineteenth century has hung as many able-bodied Christians for social peccadilloes,—butchered as many thousands and tens of thousands for no offence at all,—deposed as many sovereigns for evincing the instinct of sovereignty, and created as many more to engender them anew,—as any of its predecessors. If intolerance no longer enkindle her auto-da-fés at Lisbon, India persists in lighting vedovial pyres under our protection ; and though we have ceased to roast bishops at Smithfield, we roast them in parliament, besides sending forth missionaries to be eaten raw in our proselyte colonies. Druggists' shops and attorneys' offices have increased by two-thirds ;—and law, physic, and taxation, affix their vampire claws into the citizenship of this enlightened metropolis quite as fiercely, as before the invention of railroads, the ascent of the Nassau balloon, or the erection of King's College and the National Gallery.

The only point on which we have effected positive amelioration is the abbreviation of public prose, and the decimation of domestic bores. Authors have ceased to twaddle for writing sake,—because no man readeth; orators have ceased to twaddle, for speaking sake,—because no man listeneth. It is not pleasant to find the weight of our arguments inflicted on groaning shelves or empty benches; and if Richardson lived in the year of Railroads X., he would reduce his eight volumes to three, as surely as our patent medicine chests have been reduced from hundred-weights of jalap to penny-weights of homœopathic nothing at all.

The Americans have converted the Decalogue into a Dodecation, by the adoption of two commandments of Christian origin, which are said, sung, or whined, in all the churches of the States. But when brother Jonathan took upon himself the emendation of the law, it is a thousand pities but he had added a thirteenth to the dozen, by a decree of—"Thou shalt not prose." Such, however, is the contrariety of human nature, that this very prohibition might

have perpetuated the nuisance, which, like others connived at by the magistracy of the realm, is gradually wearing itself out. One might almost fancy the Tories had announced a tax upon prose, so sensible is the diminution of the article in even the best read and best conducted of country neighbourhoods. Mankind will not submit to be held by the button while the train is waiting, the *Magnet* agitating her paddles, Rubini singing, Taglioni dancing, Bouffé acting, the orchestra of Strauss modulating its waltzes, or the Sistine Chapel its "Stabat Mater." Let the wisdom of parliament concentrate itself within its blue covers; let the wisdom of the squirearchy concentrate itself within its green coverts; but we will none of their bagged foxes turned out upon us! Society, like a huge boa-constrictor, refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he (as the Vulgate vulgarly hath it) "*never so wisely.*"

By this time, reader, you will have recognised me as an inveterate Bore-hater. I forestall your sneers. My freedom from self-love is very remarkable! No earthly bore do I detest more

than myself! But being unable to part company without a felonious attempt, which, if bootless, the Thames Dogberrys are beginning to reward with the treadmill, I bear with my partner for life, on condition of his agreeing with me in hearty animosity towards all others of his species.

The first Bore I remember as exciting my worldly disgusts, was my nurse. Having had the good fortune to be born what is called a son and heir, merry peals were jangled in my honour; vast portions of raw beef devoured by my father's tenantry, from donations of oxen roasted whole; and I was, of course, afflicted throughout my infancy by the slow torture of a professed head nurse;—a woman who had “Underwood's Diseases of Children” by heart—(such a pebble stone of a heart as it was!) and inflicted Buchan's Domestic Medicine upon me—page after page,—dose after dose. I went through the alphabetical index, from Ague to——

But why administer the filthy recapitulation to my robust readers? Suffice it that I survived the united batteries of the Pharmaco-

peia Londinensis and its rival of Edinburgh.

In process of time, the old woman addressed herself to the care of my mind instead of the cure of my body ; drenched me with the spelling-book, in lieu of senna tea ; and insisted upon Watt's Hymns three times a day, instead of emulsion. I began to grow very wicked indeed, under the arbitrary infliction of these alteratives. A much longer course off "How *doath* the little busy bee," and "Let dogs delight," would have driven me to some monstrous perpetration, I should have cut off the end-tail of nurse Grimsey's favourite tabby, or effected a burglary on her spectacle case. By sheer force of boring, the old creature was inciting all the worst passions of human nature in my son-and-heirified bosom.

But ere the sins of the bosom were visited on the neck, as they might chance to have been, Mrs. Grimsey, by drinking to herself every night after supper, and herself acknowledging the pledge, so as to drink for two, brought on a liver complaint ; and one fine

September, died of our excellent October. My tears were less abundant than they ought to have been. In life and death

Too little of water hadst thou, poor Ophelia !

I should have wept hogsheads, however, had I at that time surmised what it was to exchange a head nurse for a tutor whose vocation was more comprehensive. To "kiss the rod" is an admirable figure of speech for an epitaph ; but the rod being of well-twigged birch, shew me the heir-apparent who was ever thus submissive.

I was all the more flogged by my tutor, because my poor mother shortly followed my head-nurse to the grave ; overpowered, I verily believe, by the fatigue of her own nursery, which, by the decease of Mrs. Grimsey, devolved to her hands.—Either I was a prodigious dunce, or Mr. Tickle prodigiously addicted to flagellation. I am inclined to suspect that he had recourse to this species of quotidian exercise to ward off the ague ; for our family seat was nearly as cold and damp as our family vault, and alas ! *not* situated, by way of antidote, in a coal country. Every day, therefore, the chilly

Tickle managed to flog both himself and his disciple into a glow. My father looked coolly on, or rather did not look at all. He was making amends to himself for all the privations—in fox-hunting, claret, and other items—to which he had been compelled during the somewhat strict reign of his wife; and took little thought of me, except as a growing evil—an heir to his property, obstinately surviving to prevent the entail being cut *off*, or the timber *down*.—I was probably as great a bore to *him*, as Tickle to myself!—

A few years ago, there was a German diabolism much in fashion, called “Peter Schlemihl,” setting forth how a man was induced to sell his shadow to the devil. People who pretended to know more than their neighbours, discovered that the shadow parted with by Peter was figurative of CONSCIENCE. Now, Tickle was *my* shadow—*my* conscience; and could I have persuaded the foul fiend to bid for him, his Satanic Majesty should have had an easy bargain. Not an hour of the twenty-four, in which the conscientious tutor was not tagging at my heels; not

only over my Homer or slate, to which he was of course a professional appendage; but no sooner did I take pen or fishing-rod in hand, than *his* was on my shoulder! If my father's keepers invited me to a private rat-hunt, Tickle was sure to smell a rat; if I made an appointment with them for an excursion before daylight to the warren, Tickle was on the look-out, hours before the rabbits. He kept the key of the boat-house,—he kept the key of the archery-closet,—he kept the duplicate of the grape-house and pineries,—he kept the key of everything, in short, but the library, which nobody wanted to enter but himself. The only *lock* he left open in the house was the one of the Human Understanding. He called this doing his duty to his employer. Between ourselves, reader, it was only in the hope of doing duty hereafter in one of the family livings.

It is a melancholy thing to go on hating alone. LOVE, they say, is the divinity of duettinos; and Happiness, Lord Byron assures us—

Is born a twin.

I am of opinion that the untender passion is

quite as much in need of sympathy as the tender one ; and it was the greatest solace to my feelings when I found my antipathy to my tutor shared by the amiable family of the parson of the parish, whose views upon the Ganderfield ferment were nearly as rapacious as his own.

The Parsonage stood only a quarter of a mile from our lodge gates ; and it was, consequently, the readiest of my truanicies to slip out whenever Tickle was busy setting my themes for the morrow, or corresponding with a college chum, (a brother dunce-driver in some honourable family,) and make my way over the fields, which the square brick mansion at the end of them caused me to regard as Elysian.

There, I was always welcome—*there*, I was shadowless ! Tickle had no grounds for complaining to my father of my frequenting Mr. Meanwell's society. For the parson was a favourite at the hall ; a good scholar, moreover, who would have been a schoolmaster himself, had he not been a parson ; and consequently, an unexceptionable companion for the young squire. It was only when Tickle could pounce upon me

on the road, and falsify my migration into a visit to the stables or kennel, that he was able to back up the impending chastisement with my father's authority. Once housed in the parsonage, I was safe.—The Bore was distanced !

How happy were those stolen mornings ! I suppose the rod and line, (for which I exchanged the tutor's rod and cane) and guns and powder-horns of poor Meanwell, were little different from other fishing-tackle, or other sporting apparatus. To *me*, they were unique. To get away from Tickle and find them in my hands, to get away from Tickle, and find myself and them in the hands of one who regarded the tutor as a sneaking fellow, was a holiday indeed !

And then, Mrs. Meanwell was such an incomparable creature, (incomparable, I mean, to the appreciation of twelve years old) ! Such an accomplished woman—such a delicate artist ! No trumpery getter-up of fancy screens, or dauber of unmeaning landscapes. Her apricot marmalade was the thing—her queen-cakes were the brightest emanation of genius ;—nor did the

Earl of Sefton, with all his Italian confectioners, ever taste such clarified currants! In my estimation, Madame Dacier and Mrs. Barbauld were fools to Mrs. Meanwell. A sweetmeat closet is, after all, the only *cabinet d'étude* appropriate to the sweet sex!

It was in that parsonage I learnt to appreciate the erroneousness of priestly celibacy, as enforced by the Roman canons. Mrs. Meanwell was nursing mother to the village. The old women would never have got through their rheumatism, or the young ones through the production of younger, but for her opodeldoc and caudle. The squire's wife is usually too busy to think of such matters, or too fine a lady not to administer as much fright as comfort by her domiciliary visits. But Mrs. Parson is as comfortable to the poor as a gift of fleecy-hosiery; and I know that in the disposal of *my* preferment, I am much more likely to insist upon the incumbents of my family livings being married men, than either on their classics or their oratory. Few Bachelors of Arts but can read the Bible without much spelling.—But what is to become of a helpless

village, in fever time, with a bachelor parson?—

Between Mrs. Meanwell's preserves, and the means afforded by her husband for attacking my father's, the whole happiness of my life lay at the parsonage. Of the two little girls, their offspring, I thought nothing. They were sewing their samplers; and even had they been as idle and mischievous as myself, a girl of ten is never otherwise than a bore to a boy of twelve.

It was only by the time I came to be a young gentleman of eighteen, that Harriet and Emma advanced into rivalry with the apricot marmalade; and I own I would *then* have given the whole contents of the parson's fishing-cases, or rather, I would have given the parson the whole contents of Ustonson's shop, for a glance of the black eyes of the one, or a gleam of the blue eyes of the other.

For Meanwell had progressed into a bore, just as the little humdrums in pinafores had progressed into beauties. Tickle was now Dr. Tickle, and the principal of a college. His boreishness had found an appropriate sphere, and

was unperceived, amid that of five hundred other bores, greater than himself. He now abided, moreover, one hundred and forty-five miles distant from the hall, and his boredom regarded me no longer,—whereas Meanwell was a permanent evil. Meanwell was anchored within a quarter of a mile of me for life ;—a bore moored at my park gates, like the convict ship at Woolwich.

Strong in the obligations he had conferred on my boyhood,—fortified against my peace with all the apricot marmalade and queen-cakes I had swallowed in his parlour,—he assumed towards the young squire a privilege of familiarity which my Oxford susceptibilities could scarcely brook. I might be excused some degree of pride and self-sufficiency,—for I had only twelve-months before exchanged my principedom of Wales for the Crown of Ganderfield ; and assumed my first airs of sovereignty, and assumed them in vain, with the view of shaking off my Falstaff. Meanwell had become as inseparably my shadow as Tickle had ever been. The hall lay as convenient to the parsonage as

the parsonage had formerly lain to the hall. My cellar was just as attractive now, as Mrs. Meanwell's sweetmeat closet of yore ; and the cloth evinced its usual instincts by sticking to the table-cloth.

The worst of it was, that I could dispose of my new shadow neither to devil nor angel. Not a minute of the day could I get rid of him !—Least of all, when I visited the parsonage, and felt that *he* ought to be visiting the sick ;—when he might have gone and tickled my trout and shot my pheasants, as he had taught me to shoot my father's, while I was trying to ascertain whether the two girls were as adroit at netting purses as they had formerly been at marking canvas. But the bustling helpmate of poor Meanwell was at length quiet in the churchyard ; and instead of replacing her in her parochial office of nursing the old women, he chose to devote himself to watching the young ones.—Yes !—decidedly, he was twice as great a bore as Tickle.

Three years afterwards, the parsonage possessed three bores instead of one ; for on the

attainment of my majority, both Harriet and Emma insisted on becoming my better half! Had they proposed going thirds, I might have submitted; but the difficulty of selection saved me. Both pretended equal claims upon my heart and hand. All I could say in answer was, that if I ever made an offer of either, I must have been dreaming; and as it appeared that whatever I might have said or done in my sleep, I had written nothing. I had not committed myself sufficiently to be required to commit matrimony.—Besides, the lawyers would have had to toss up, to decide in favour of which sister to institute proceedings for a breach of promise. I had sauntered in the green lanes in company with Harriet quite as often as in company with Emma; and then, as well as in my fishing-parties with both sisters in alternation, the eternal shadow was ever behind us!

Three bores, however, in conjunction—a very Cerberus of Boredom—was three times too much for my nerves! So long as I sojourned at the hall, I fancied that they looked briefs at me from the pulpit and family pew; and mis-

took every invitation to dinner for a sub-pœna.

To avoid all this, like other gentlemen in difficulties, I went abroad. My family seat was quite bore enough in itself, without this accession. It was

To gild refined gold, and paint the lily,

to increase its powers of offuscation.

Were you ever at Baden, reader?—Never?—Then I swear I should envy you, were I capable of envying any mortal soul, unless, perhaps, the lions of the day in the first blush of their leonine popularity. So long as a man figures in Madame Tussaud's advertisements, whether Lord Palmerston, Commissioner Lin, Espartero, or Father Matthew, he excites envy in my bosom. But of the vulgar mass into which he is fated to subside in the course of a season, I would not exchange myself for one in a million.—However, I should envy you if I could, for not having seen Baden-Baden—for you would have a great disappointment before you,—and a great disappointment is a great

sensation; and a sensation in this flattest of worlds is worth its weight—in lead.—

Baden is one of the spots which certain individuals having ten thousand a year, and living, as Hazlitt says, on their own estates, and the ideas of other people, have learnt from the guide books, (which are paid so much a year by the hotels, to praise the place), is “Switzerland in miniature.”—The cut and dry phrase saves a vast expenditure of eloquence; and on their return to England from the terrible, “Three months on the Rhine,” which is to encumber their heads and drawing-room tables for the remainder of their lives, with Rhenish souvenirs,—fragments of basalt from Bonn, tufa from Andernach, and granite from Ehrenbreitstein, besides whole trusses of dried grass from the Drachenfels and Bergstrasse,—sketches of three hundred and sixty-five ruined castles, each cousin-german to the other, and silver trinkets from Coblenz, and iron ones from Frankfort such as would have put Tubal-Cain to the blush,—all they have to say in answer to the interrogations of the neighbouring squirearchy,

concerning Baden-Baden, is, that it is "Switzerland in miniature."

Just as much Switzerland in miniature, my good friend, as the Montblanc of a pedlar's shew-box or the Cosmorama,—is "the monarch of mountains!"—Baden-Baden is a tolerable little scoop of a valley "navelled in the wooded hills" of the Black Forest—which Black Forest is as green as grass, or as the tourists who go mad about it, except when the autumnal frost changes its beechwoods to yellow.

The pine—long-haired, and dark, and tall,
In lordly pride predominant o'er all

(as Leigh Hunt sings), is far from the prevailing tree of the Schwarzwald.—A few toppling crags peering out among the bowery woods, impart a picturesque touch to the landscape, which is Ruysdaelish, and pretty enough; but about as much resembling the fine features of Switzerland as it resembles Chimborazo.—It is much more like Matlock;—if you can imagine "that romantic watering-place," (which the

Arkwrights and their cotton-mills have vulgarized into common-place), infested by a few crowned heads, *incog*,—a legion of Russian Princes, Saxon Serenissimes, opera-dancers, *en vacances*, and *chevaliers d'industrie* in full activity.—

The first thing that struck me on my arrival there, was the peering forth from all the hotel windows and court-yard gates, of certain round unmeaning faces, which, after so long an absence from England, I hailed almost with satisfaction, as those of my country people. The English are certainly the greatest starrers in ancient or modern Europe!—They fix their eyes upon the human face divine with as little compunction, as though it were insensible to being stared at, as the Rock of the Lurlei!—When travelling in foreign countries, intuitive misgivings induce them to mistrust all but ocular demonstration.—If assured that a church or a valley is not worth visiting, in or off they go to it that very moment;—suspecting that their informant, whether fellow-tourist or *valet de place*, has some nefarious motive for

his information.—They choose to go and stare for themselves !

At such places as Emms or Baden, their staring exceeds belief. They go there for fashion's sake,—on the inducement of health or pleasure, held forth by the flash tour of the season ; and on their arrival, finding the majestic scenery diminish to a narrow valley surrounded by copses, and the waters, which are to make them young again like snakes casting their skins or the *Fontaine de Jouvence* little more effective against old age or intemperance, inveterate gout or any other of the innumerable ills that flesh is heir to, than Aldgate pump,—dunced by not understanding the language, affronted by the simplicity of German life, and with every thing about them strange and comfortless, they console themselves for the loss of port and madeira, the *Times*, and Harvey's sauce, by looking out discontentedly for new arrivals of fresh dupes, in the forlorn hope that any change may serve to help them through the remainder of the month, for which they have engaged their apartments.

A few individuals, more brilliant than the rest, having some acquaintance among the serenissimes and opera-dancers, pursue the same habits of life, *aux eaux*, that they would at Paris or Naples ; and a few more, of the Bloomsbury and Baker Street class, agitate themselves to hysterics in hunting up the crowned heads, *incog*, and getting up an intimacy with some Russian princess, who turns out, in the sequel, to be an opera-singer from Berlin or Dresden, of temporary princessification. —But the majority content themselves with parading arm and arm, in phalanxes, day after day, hour after hour, the public promenades ; —laborious loungers,—out and astir when others are safe at home from the noontide heat,—and rushing home to dine, when others come forth to enjoy the cool of the evening.

Unable to repress, even in the *sans-gêne* existence of a country bathing-place, their appetite for display, resolved, *advienne qui pourra*, to be better dressed, and better mounted than “those foreigners,” they lame their fine horses in roads where mountain ponies are the thing

needful, and by attiring themselves for a simple promenade as for the opera, place themselves in rivalry with the least reputable classes of the community,—the *chevaliers d'industrie* in activity, and actresses *en retraite*.

On arriving at the hotel, I was required, according to the custom of Germany, to inscribe my name and calling,—stating whence I came, and whither I was going. It was easy enough to say that I was come from being bored, and going the deuce knew where—though, of course, in the decent terms prescribed by police regulations.—But when it came to my designation, I was stupid enough to ask information of my courier.

“How am I to describe myself?” said I.

“Monsieur is doubtless something?”—

Justly indignant at his putting the question as a supposition, I gave him to understand that I was not only something, but somebody.

“*Mais puisque Monsieur est quelque chose,*” remonstrated the man, “he is perhaps in some profession,—perhaps—in business?”—

"I am neither in a profession nor in business!" cried I, squaring my elbows.

"In that case," said the man, "the police understands but two great distinctions;—you are either a *Kaufman*, or *Edelman*, — either gentle or simple."—

"I am gentle, Sir!" cried I, simply enough. —"But don't bore me any further on the subject.—Write down, yourself, what is necessary. I am a gentleman of fortune, living on my estates, and travelling for my pleasure. Put that (in German) into your pipe and smoke it."

Instead of smoking *it*, the fellow smoked *me* ! I thought no more of the book,—but took my place at the *table d'hôte*, among the other idlers ; and was satisfied to perceive that, though not a single familiar face greeted me at Chabert's, the strange ones evinced tokens of wishing to become so.—Several foreign men with ribbon-holes in their buttons, entered cheerfully into conversation with me ; and a variety of English women, very much resembling the fashionables of Musard's concerts, oppressed me with civilities. In the course of the two

first days, I was established on the most familiar footing in several Thompson and Johnson families ;—engaged in pic-nics to Eberstein, and gypsy parties at the Teufelskanzel ; nay, a few had gone the lengths of verbal invitations to Thompson Park or Johnson Hall, on our mutual return to England. But, alas !—the third day came a frost—a killing frost. The chevaliers, with ribands in their button-holes, turned a cold shoulder upon me ; and when I attempted to accost the young ladies, with putty coloured ringlets, and figures resembling sofa-bolsters girthed with a waistband, the Thompson and Johnson mammas began to utter plaintive cries, and gather them under their wings, as a barn-door partlet her chickens when a hawk heaves in sight.

I was consternated.—But when I get into a scrape, I stay and fight it out ; and in the course of the afternoon, I took an opportunity of addressing myself to a certain stout gentleman, who invariably carried in his promenades a stout ash stick, instigating one to ask him impertinent questions without the imputation of cowardice ;

—and who, under the somewhat comprehensive patronym of Smith, had invited me, after a quarter of an hour's acquaintance, to visit him at his "place" at Chertsey.

From something in his mode of handling the ash-stick, my mind misgave me that he was better accustomed to handle a yard-measure, though he assumed throughout our interview the attitude of the gold-stick in waiting.

"A fine evening!" said I, accosting him almost as abruptly as, in the first instance, he had accosted me.

"I'm no judge of weather, Sir," was the summary reply.

"I am watching it with some interest just now, Sir, on account of our pic-nic to-morrow at Gernsbach," said I, persevering against wind and tide.

"*Your* pic-nic may take place to-morrow, Sir, but *mine* won't!" retorted Smith, striking the ash-stick so emphatically on the cobble-stone pavement, as to excite the attention of three or four Paris dandies, who, in straw hats, grey blouses, and unbleached gaiters, fitting the

slender ankles over which they were laced, like corsets, were standing "*mon cher-ing*" each other at the corner of the street.

"Had you done me the honour to apprise me of your change of intentions, Sir," I began—in a voice of exceeding mildness—not by way of "turning away wrath" by a soft answer, but because anxious to avoid recreating the *élégants* of the *Café de Paris*, by what they delight in above all other spectacles, *i. e.* the self-exposure of the English. But, unluckily, my submissive tone encouraged the pugnacity of him of the ash-stick.

Again smiting the pavement with the feruled point:

"Sir!", interrupted Mr. Smith, "I don't feel myself no ways accountable for my actions to a mere stranger."

"Nevertheless," said I, "as the proposal for this party originated with yourself—"

"Originated with myself when I thought all straight sailing betwixt us!" retorted my companion. "*My* name's John Smith, Esq. Any body may see *that* who chooses to read the list

of company at Baden-Baden ; and I have got no other—no alias whatever. Other folks, who sail under false colours, I take to be pirates.—Sir, there *is* such things at Baden-Baden as *peeradges* !”

“Plenty of both peers *and* peerages, I make no doubt,” was my reply ; “though I do not exactly perceive their connexion with our pic-nic !”

“No, no !—I’ll take care they *have* no connexion with our pic-nic.—As I said before, Sir, I wrote myself down plain Esquire, and think myself none the worse for it. I’m not so fond of a title, Mister Ganderfield—ay, Sir, *Mister* Ganderfield—as to think to come over a parcel of ignorant forruners by imposing of myself upon ’em for a lord !”

“No one, I should imagine, ever accused you of so bold an attempt !” replied I. “The only Lord Smith I can call to remembrance, was a Lord Mayor.”

“And the only Lord Ganderfield *I* can call to *mind*, Sir, is an imposter, Sir !” cried Smith, in a heightened key, again bringing down the full

force of his indignation and his stick upon the Grand Duke of Baden's highway.

"If you should ever visit Cheshire, Mr. Smith," said I, "it will give me pleasure to prove to you, that *out* of your remembrance, nay, out of the remembrance of your father's father, yet so recently as the reign of James I., the House of Peers had Ganderfields sitting in it, both of the elder and junior branch.—I shall be happy to show you their portraits in my gallery—their genealogy in my hall."

"Don't think to come over *me*, Sir, with your branches, and your genology!" cried Smith, taking off his broad-brimmed light beaver, and wiping his brows, so much was his spirit roused by what he considered my unparalleled audacity. "When gentlemen come abroad, Sir, imposing upon people with feigned titles, one has a right to suppose that the hall they boast of is no better than a passage, Sir; and the gallery, no better than the one shilling, Sir—the one shilling one, I say!—Take your change out of *that*, Mr. Ganderfield!"

"The only change I am likely to take, Sir,

is an exchange of cards!" said I, with cool urbanity, though nearly as much excited as himself.

"Here's mine, Sir—*here's* mine, in as plain print as the Weekly Dispatch!—'Mr. John Smith, Poplar Grove, Chertsey,' cried my impetuous foe."

"It might be more to the purpose, Sir, to favour me with your Baden address," said I, presenting my own card in return, without the slightest suspicion that my irate friend was so little versed in the usages of the world as to fancy this exchange of cards purposed a mere certification of respectability.

"Humph! 'Mr. Ganderfield, Hôtel de Bade'—and underneath (scratched out), 'Ganderfield Hall!'—at least, Sir, you haven't the face, I see, to persist, in private, in your impositions."

"What the devil do you mean, Sir?" cried I, unable to bear more; and exercising some self-control in not snatching the stick out of his hands to apply it to his shoulders.

"Oh! my *meaning's* plain enough, Sir," said Smith. "I mean that when folks are

called *Monsieur* Ganderfield in their passport (mark *that* Sir!) and write themselves down, *my Lord* Ganderfield in the traveller's book."

"Who *dares* to say that I ever wrote myself down, my Lord, either in a traveller's book, or any where else?" cried I, beginning to foam at the mouth. "Who presumes to—"

"*Messieurs, Messieurs!*" interposed the delicate creatures in moustachios and laced gaiters, anticipating, from the a-kimboed arms of Smith of Poplar Lodge, that *beau idéal* of great British valour, in French estimation—a boxing-match. "*Messieurs! respectez la présence de ces dames!—les convenances, les convenances!*"

I now perceived that there were half-a-dozen Misses Smith screaming and crying "police!" in the background, while their enraged parent kept protesting, in answer to the moderative party, that "he was no *M'seer*, thank God, not *he!*—and that we desired none of their gammon."

I had lived long enough in the world to entertain an unholy horror of ridicule: and the dread of

being included in that which Mr. John Smith, of Poplar Lodge, was bringing upon himself, restored me to a sense of my situation. Taking off my hat to the ground to the pacificators, in token of my perfect self-possession, I assured them, in French too good to be understood by my companion, that there was nothing to be apprehended; that "*ce Monsieur*" and I perfectly understood each other; that we were deciding a *gageure*, and that I had the honour to wish them a good day."

"*Une gageure?—à la bonne heure!*" cried the *chef d'orchestre* of the vociferators. And away they went, muttering, amid suppressed laughter the words, "*originaux*" and "*épiciers*," which I thought it inexpedient to overhear; one Mr. Smith at a time, being as much as I could manage.

Having disposed of the spectators, and the Misses Smiths having disposed of themselves by scampering home to the Saumon Hotel, in search of Mrs. John Smith, of Poplar Lodge, I found it easier to come to an explanation with my antagonist. He offered to give

me proof in black and white, of the truth of his assertions; and proof in black and white being more agreeable than proofs in black and blue I agreed to accompany him home to the Cour de Bade.

Too true, by all that was detestable! My ass of a courier had translated "*Edelman*," into a Lord; and there I stood, like a jay in peacock's plumes, recorded as "my Lord Ganderfield;" to be transferred as such to all the printed lists of company published, not only at the baths, but throughout the German Empire; and thus to be quoted among the distinguished visitors to Baden-Baden, in the columns of Galignani's Messenger, and the Morning Post! What would my Cheshire neighbours say! How would the Philistines rejoice! Of all the bores I had yet encountered, this was the greatest!

On perceiving the genuineness of my vexation, and overhearing my apostrophe to the offending courier, garnished with as many "damns" as became the occasion, Mr. John Smith of Poplar Lodge became satisfied that, if not a peer of the

realm, I was a "true born Englishman;" and I found myself as vehemently slapped on the back as I had previously seen the ash stick struck upon the stones, while mine enemy protested that he believed I was a good fellow after all.

From that moment, I became restored to the confidence of the chevaliers d'industrie and travelling actresses,—grand-ducal aid-de-camps, and royal chamberlains;—was invited to a *poule* at billiards by the fifth cousin of a mediatized prince, and actually surveyed (through their glasses), without much disgust, by a party of English honourables; who, affecting to walk through Baden, compact and undefiled, as the Rhone traverses the Lake of Constance,—had hitherto turned aside their heads. Throughout the Grand-Duchy of Baden, (which would be unheard of in the History of Europe, if one of its hill-sides did not happen to emit two or three ill-savoured springlets of warm water, as Cheltenham would be still a village, but for its detergent salts), I still remained Lord Ganderfield for the general.

The select few were enacting plays and cha-

rades for the edification of the select many, among whom they did not disdain to include me; and in more than one of Chabert's choicest *dîners de commande*, the name of Lord Ganderfield obtained as honourable a position in the list of company, as the *filets de truite* in the bill of fare.

The more I dis-belorded myself, in short, the more they persisted in be-lording me. My courier, they fancied, had betrayed my incognito; and Smith, of Poplar Hall, they were certain, proclaimed me to be a good man and true. During my fortnight's stay, I grew so accustomed to my new rank, as to become affable and condescending.

It was only on quitting the place, and booking up, however, that I discovered the exact percentage entailed by the word "*Edelman*." Like the tax imposed by our Chancellors of the Exchequer on armorial bearings, I was mulcted with due severity for my unwitting pretensions to nobility; and I promise you, gentle reader, that on arriving, shortly afterwards, at the dirty village where his Majesty, the King of Bavaria,

in order not to be outdone by his grand ducal neighbours, boils his little mineral kettle, and calls it "*les eaux*," I inscribed my name as Ganderfield *Kaufman*, in a running text, as awfully legible as that in which a village apothecary inscribes POISON on the label of a vial of Godfrey's Cordial.

This, however, was but mistaking reverse of wrong for right. The "pride that aped humility," only served to betray me into further troubles.—But you have probably heard enough of my travelling disasters in my adventure at Baden-Baden.

END OF VOL. II.

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